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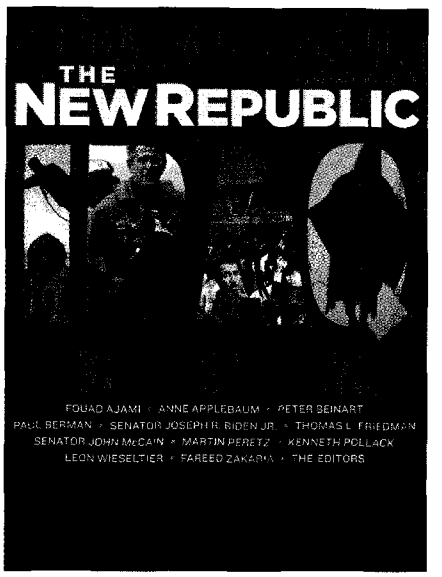
CORRESPONDENCE

IN RETROSPECT...

THE "WERE WE WRONG?" ISSUE should have been called the "Cover Your Butt Issue" (June 28). Yes, Saddam Hussein was a brutal, murderous thug. But there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. There were no links to the terrorists who murdered nearly 3,000 Americans on September 11, 2001. In conception and execution, the war in Iraq has been a disaster. The war we should have been fighting—the war on terrorism—has been neglected. Now that THE NEW REPUBLIC's editors have (reluctantly) concluded that they were bamboozled by the administration's lies and shocked by its incompetence, they're tripping over themselves trying to explain how they got it so wrong. Some contributors, such as Kenneth Pollack, have the chutzpah to suggest that, by getting it wrong, they actually got it right. Where's Orwell when you need him? My suggestion: Stop with the mea culpas. Instead, do what any business would do with a defective product—get rid of the inventory. Clean out your stable of blundering intellectuals and hire new ones. The realization that being wrong on critical issues could be a career-stopper should make the minds of your replacement ideologues a little more supple.

HOWARD SEFTEL
Phoenix, Arizona

WERE WE WRONG? NO, WE WERE right. I find it astonishing that nobody ever mentions the clearest and best reason for the war: Iraq defied the cease-fire terms set forth in U.N. Resolution 687. That resolution, agreed to by Iraq in 1991, required the disarmament of Iraq and the free access of inspectors. Iraq violated the agreement for twelve years. That alone was sufficient, and it was the best reason for war. A treaty is not optional. The analogy, of course, is with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which demanded that Germany not place military forces in the Rhineland. In 1936, Germany broke the treaty. The clear obligation of Great Britain and France, the victors at Versailles, was to take military action. They were too befuddled and cowardly to do so, even though it would have been easy to throw back a few thousand German troops. Had they acted,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Hitler might have been deterred from further adventures and tens of millions of lives might have been spared. What is most significant is that everyone, including the pacifist left, is now furious at the French and British for failing to make preemptive war in 1936. If peace treaties are to be credible, they must be enforced. The losing side must know that its choice is between compliance and war.

EDWARD J. PRENNER
Forest Hills, New York

IN "WERE WE WRONG?" THE EDITORS recognize a difference between Iraq and other military interventions to stop genocide: "Iraq was no longer the scene of genocide" when we invaded, though "it remained among the ghastliest regimes of our time." To claim that military intervention is justified by a regime's past genocide—or continuing repression—is to lower the bar to war significantly. This moral bar-lowering mirrors the Bush administration's strategic bar-lowering: It claims that potential, rather than imminent, security threats justify preemptive war. Concern is widespread that the new preemption doctrine might increase the worldwide risk of war. Might not the new moral doctrine do the same?

DANIEL J. FREED
Santa Monica, California

YOUR ISSUE SUGGESTED A REappraisal of support for the Iraq war in the best liberal tradition. But no author seriously addressed two questions that haunted many critics before, during, and after the war: First, is it moral, just, or even strategically desirable for the United States (or any country) to initiate a war against another sovereign nation, however evil, when most allies do not join in the war? Maybe the world is better off without Saddam, but he never posed a direct threat to the United States in all his years, and many equally evil and more threatening rulers remain at large. Second, although all agree that September 11 changed the ground rules, why did we not complete our work in Afghanistan or seek regime change in Saudi Arabia, the educational spawning ground of 15 of the 19 hijackers, whose malevolent regime is just as opposed to U.S. interests? Without addressing these questions, many will remain disillusioned with the war and with TNR.

THEODORE PINCUS
Nashville, Tennessee

I APPRECIATED TNR'S COMMENTS, AS well as those of other media outlets searching their journalistic souls regarding the war in Iraq. At the risk of sounding ungrateful, however, I wish to add what I consider to be the topic most worthy of atonement: The world asked us to

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(3) what barbarian societies were like and how, through assimilation, they contributed to the successful establishment of Roman provinces.

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Ask Not

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

Barack Obama's speech at the Democratic convention drew rave reviews. So did Bill Clinton's. But my nominee for best oration of the week goes to Senator Joseph Biden. On Thursday night at about eight o'clock—long before the networks began their broadcasts—Biden laid out the most compelling Democratic foreign policy vision I have yet heard. I just wish more of it had found its way into John Kerry's acceptance speech two hours later.

Biden started by correctly naming America's enemy. Unlike Kerry, who mentioned "terrorists," "antiterrorist operations," and "a global war on terror," Biden never mentioned the "T" word. Instead, he spoke of the "death struggle between freedom and radical fundamentalism." The difference is more than semantic. Terrorism, as commentators have pointed out, is a tactic. Sri Lankan suicide bombers who blow themselves up in the name of Tamil independence are terrorists—but we are not at war with them. If militants in Iraq shoot only at American soldiers and not at civilians, they are not technically terrorists—but they are our enemies nonetheless. Radical Islam is an ideology, and calling it the enemy implies that America is fighting a war not just of national interest, but of ideas. "Radical fundamentalism," Biden said, "will fall to the terrible, swift power of our ideas as well as our swords."

Kerry also lauded American values, saying, "I know the power of our ideals. We need to make America once again a beacon in the world. We need to be looked up to and not just feared." But, because he hadn't defined the enemy by reference to *its* ideas, his statement about American principles lacked context and force. A beacon is also a very different metaphor than a sword. Biden said the "death struggle between freedom and radical fundamentalism ... breached our shores on September 11." Notice the implication: The war against radical Islam began *before* September 11—in other corners of the globe. Thus, victory requires the United States to play an active role in conflicts *within* other societies, particularly Muslim ones. Kerry's statement, by contrast, can be read as a call merely for the United States to live out its ideals at home, secure that the world is watching. Indeed, his speech said nothing about promoting democracy in Iraq or anywhere else.

By defining America's war less expansively, Kerry implicitly asked less of the American people. Speaking about Iraq, he said, "We need a president who has the credibility to bring our allies to our side and share the burden, reduce the cost to American taxpayers, and reduce the risk to American soldiers. That's the right way to get the job done and bring our troops home." But there's a trade-off between "get[ting] the job done" and "bring[ing] our troops home." Kerry could have said we need more foreign troops in Iraq to buttress the existing American ones—and thus achieve the overall number General Eric Shinseki famously said was necessary to secure the country. Instead, he implied that we need foreign troops to *replace* American ones. The focus wasn't on America and its allies doing more together; it was on America's allies doing more so America can do less.

A few sentences later, Kerry called for adding "forty thousand active-duty troops"—a proposal for which he deserves credit. But he promised that they would be deployed "not in Iraq, but to strengthen American forces that are now overstretched, overextended, and under pressure." America's troops certainly are overstretched. But, given that Iraq has become (whether it should have or not) the war on terrorism's central front, isn't it odd to declare ahead of time that new American troops won't be sent there? Is easing the strain on America's military really more important than making sure Iraq doesn't fall to theocracy or civil war? By calling for a bigger military and a smaller mission, Kerry sounded like George W. Bush in 2000, who tried to win military votes by offering the Armed Forces more money and less to do.

Contrast that with Biden, who said, "When John Kerry is president, our friends and allies will have no excuse to sit on the sidelines." The word "excuse" is significant: Unlike Kerry, Biden didn't lay all the blame for America's estrangement at our door. He implied that the Europeans have failed to fulfill their responsibilities, too. A Kerry administration, he suggested, would change European behavior not only by being more respectful, but also by asking *more*, not less, of the United States. Biden said Kerry "will inherit a nation and a world that will require him to ask much of us and our allies."

But it's not clear Kerry sees it that way. Nowhere in his speech did he say that America's war will require great public exertion. When Biden evoked September 11, it was to remember that "Americans stood in bloodlines for hours" and to chastise Bush for not channeling that spirit to say, "It's time for all who are able to do something for America." When Kerry evoked September 11, it was simply to remember how "we came together as one." And, while some Democrats have proposed a draft, or at least some kind of mandatory national service, to harness the post–September 11 spirit, Kerry promised merely to "end the backdoor draft of National Guard and reservists."

He also said this: "We shouldn't be opening firehouses in Baghdad and closing them down in the United States of America." The implication is that, by rebuilding Iraq, we are robbing the United States; if only we did less overseas, we can have more at home. The firehouse line further suggests the ideological and moral narrowness of the war Kerry intends to fight. After all, if the United States can't afford to fund firehouses in Baghdad, it also can't afford to fund textbooks in Pakistan or Egypt so students there aren't brainwashed in *madrassas*. Nowhere in Kerry's speech did he say that building security at home means building liberalism abroad—which will require more money and more sacrifice, not less.

At the close of his speech, Kerry asked Americans to imagine "what if" we cure Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. "What if" we provide after-school programs and end discrimination? But he never asked "what if" we help liberate the Middle East—so Muslims can live in freedom and Americans can live in peace. Biden said this generation of Americans "longs to do great things" in the world. But, when it came to the war against radical Islam, Kerry almost implied that great things were not necessary. On Thursday night, he showed the strength to be commander-in-chief. If only he had shown the imagination too.

PETER BEINART

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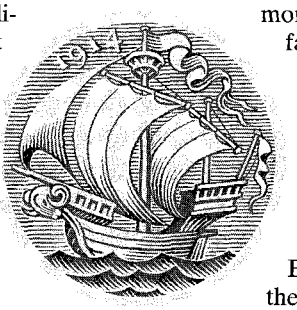
Openings

THE MAIN CRITICISMS of John Kerry's acceptance speech last week concerned not what he said but what he failed to say. Critics accused Kerry of failing to spell out his plans to eliminate the budget deficit or to secure a peaceful and democratic Iraq. These criticisms are, broadly speaking, unfair. In each case, Kerry, if elected, would be radically constrained by his predecessor's mismanagement. George W. Bush has treated the federal budget as if it were the mythical horn of plenty, a limitless source of pork and tax breaks. Taking back these giveaways (massive farm subsidies, permanent upper-bracket tax cuts) will be exceedingly difficult. Kerry's budgetary promises, anyway, have been at least as specific as Bill Clinton's were when he ran in 1992. And there is something almost dada about the fact that Kerry, not Bush, faces constant questions about his "plan" for Iraq. After all, it is Bush's inexcusable lack of postwar planning that created the mess there. All Kerry can do is continue what Bush has belatedly begun: try to persuade reluctant allies to join our efforts to stabilize and rebuild the country.

But, while Kerry has said everything he must, he has not said everything he could. Indeed, Kerry's speech—and the shrunken version of it he has taken on the road—have left out some of the most damning and politically potent indictments of the Bush administration.

Take taxes. Here, Kerry is largely playing defense. ("You've heard a lot of false charges about this in recent months," he declared in Boston, reassuring voters he would not raise middle-class taxes.) His caution would be understandable if he did not have a perfectly good way to put his opponent on the defensive. But he does. As the highly esteemed Tax Policy Center points out, the Bush tax cuts have raised the share of federal taxes paid by the middle class. Not only does this fact have the political benefit of confirming voters' worst suspicions of Republicans in general and Bush in particular, but Kerry can easily promise to reverse this by rescinding the tax cuts that benefit only the wealthiest 2 percent. The *absolute* level of middle-class taxation is a topic where the best Kerry can achieve is a tie. The *relative* level of taxation is a debate Bush can never win.

There is plenty of other unused ammunition. Many conservatives have been deeply disheartened by the Bush administration's profligate spending. It's true that defense and homeland security make up most of the increase, but waste and giveaways also account for their share. The most inviting target here is the Medicare law, which is hated by principled conservatives and liberals with equal passion. Of course, drug benefits for the elderly are popular, and Kerry won't reverse them. But the law was stuffed with tens of billions of dollars in unjustifiable subsidies for industries allied with the GOP. Thanks to the new law, private health plans will receive as much as 30 percent more from Medicare to treat a patient. (As THE NEW REPUBLIC's Jonathan Cohn reported—see "Careless," December 15, 2003—the stock of at least two major insurers rose sharply in anticipation of these windfall profits.) More outrageously, the new law prohibits the government from negotiating lower prices for prescription drugs, thus sticking pharmaceutical consumers and taxpayers with higher tabs. Bush would have a very hard time defending these giveaways if Kerry made him.



Kerry has rightly attacked Bush's lack of planning in Iraq, but he has not mentioned an analogous failure in Afghanistan. In December 2001, the Taliban and Al Qaeda leadership retreated to a one-square-mile redoubt at Tora Bora. Everything about the Afghanistan campaign had been a mere prelude to this climactic moment, when our military had the chance to kill or capture a couple hundred of the most dangerous terrorists in the world, including Osama bin Laden. But the military, with the commander-in-chief's blessing, decided to hold back ground troops and instead rely on poorly equipped and easily bribed Afghan militias, with predictably disastrous results. It's hard to say which is more inexplicable: Bush's failure to take advantage of this unique opportunity to devastate our enemies, or Kerry's failure to call him on it.

What's even more surprising is that Kerry *did* criticize the Tora Bora debacle throughout the Democratic primaries. That he has stopped doing so at the very moment it could do him the most political good boggles the mind. Tora Bora is an issue where Kerry can call on Bush to account for a massive blunder for which he has paid no political price while simultaneously highlighting one of his few reassuringly hawkish stances. If Kerry wants to win, he can't let opportunities like this pass him by. ■

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NOTEBOOK

VOTE ABSENTEE, THE GOP WARNS . . . THE FBI STILL NEEDS REFORMS

BALLOT INITIATIVE

SINCE THE 2000 RECOUNT DEBACLE Florida Governor Jeb Bush has endeavored to shore up voters' confidence in the state's new touch-screen voting machines. Bush told reporters in May that those questioning the machines' reliability were merely trying "to create a cloud of controversy during the election." Unfortunately for Bush, those troublemakers now include his own party, which recently paid for flyers urging voters to use absentee ballots because of potential problems with electronic voting. ("The new electronic voting machines do not have a paper ballot to verify your vote in case of a recount," the flyer said. "Make sure your vote counts. Order your absentee ballot today.") Bush, according to a spokesperson, was "disappointed" by the flyer. But perhaps he'll be cheered by the news that the electronic voting records from the 2002 gubernatorial primary, once thought to have been lost to computer crashes, have been found. A CD containing backup records was discovered buried among some files in a conference room near the office of the Miami-Dade County supervisor of elections. And to think people were getting all worked up.

DEFENSIVE MANEUVERS

THERE HAVE LONG BEEN VIETNAM revisionists, people who claim the war was actually justified, winnable, defensive. But few would have identified John Kerry as one of them. After all, in his famous 1971 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on behalf of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, a young Kerry said, "In our opinion and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America." But, in his acceptance speech last week, Kerry took a different view, saying that,

Jeb Bush

"I defended this country as a young man." Defended it, one might ask, from what? We already knew the left-leaning delegates crowded into Boston's FleetCenter were willing to overlook Kerry's ambiguous and shifting position on the Iraq war. But who knew they would have to do the same on Vietnam?

POLITICS AND PROSE

"WE DON'T DO POLITICS IN THE Department of Homeland Security."—Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, responding to speculation that the latest terrorism alert was announced in order to overshadow John Kerry coming out of the Democratic convention, August 3

"[W]e must understand that the kind of information available to us today is the result of the president's leadership in the war against terror."
—Ridge, announcing that same terrorism alert, August 1

CAN YOU HEAR THE WHISTLEBLOWING?

IT'S NICE TO SEE PRESIDENT BUSH take seriously the 9/11 Commission's call for a national intelligence director. But there are significant elements of the Commission's report that Bush seems to have missed. One of those areas—the FBI's inability to enact structural and cultural reforms—was highlighted last week by news that yet another agent has been pushed out of the Bureau after calling attention to shortcomings in its antiterrorism efforts. *The New York Times* reported on August 2 that Mike German—who, during his 16 years with the Bureau, had proved ingenious at infiltrating radical organizations—was pressured into quitting after he complained that his supervisors were ignoring his reports that Americans in Tampa might be collaborating with overseas Islamic terrorists. German's story is disturbing, but it's also part of a pattern (remember Coleen Rowley and Sibel Edmonds) in which whistleblowers have been punished for speaking out. And, despite FBI Director Robert Mueller's repeated assertion that he's aggressively restructuring the Bureau, the 9/11 Commission wrote that "we also found gaps between some of the announced reforms and the reality in the field." Obviously, the Bureau needs to start listening more closely to its agents. And Bush needs to listen more closely to the 9/11 Commission.

DEFICIT-ATTENTION DISORDER

IT'S BAD ENOUGH WHEN REPORTERS fall for Bush administration spin—even worse when they've had ample warning. Last week, when the White House released new numbers on the deficit, that's exactly what happened.

Joshua Bolten, director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), announced that his office now estimates the deficit will be $445 billion this year. While still a record shortfall, Bolten was quick to point out that the new figure is

DAVID COWLES

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$76 billion less than OMB projected six months ago—evidence, he claimed, that the administration's plan to halve the deficit in five years is "ahead of pace." "We believe that [the lower deficit projection] is a product of the strong economic policies that the president has put in place," Bolten said.

Many news organizations quickly picked up this story line. For instance, on NBC's evening broadcast, anchor Brian Williams parroted Bolten's claim that the new number "was good news because it came in lower than earlier projections." But, as Williams and every other reporter should have known, the new deficit projection was lower than earlier estimates largely because those earlier estimates were grossly inflated. In fact, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities warned months ago that the administration would use exaggerated deficit projections to later claim headway on deficit reduction. If only the media had been paying attention.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

"Star Search" by Noam Scheiber (August 9) mistakenly referred to the mayor of Baltimore as Tom O'Malley; his first name is Martin. It also stated that California Treasurer Phil Angelides was the only likely California gubernatorial candidate to speak at the Democratic convention. In fact, another probable candidate, state controller Steve Westly, also spoke. In addition, the article wrongly reported that Angelides was co-chair of Kerry's California fund-raising operation; he is not. We regret the errors.

DEPARTMENT OF CLARIFICATIONS

"Power from the People" by Jonathan Chait (July 26) noted that President Bush has held far fewer solo press conferences than his immediate predecessors. We would like to note Professor Martha Joynt Kumar of Towson University provided this fact. ■

TNR.commentary

Campaign Journal

RYAN LIZZA

SHOUT-OUT: Something seems to get into Teresa Heinz Kerry's system by the end of the day. At morning events, she is more on-message, often an inspiring speaker. By evening she is, as she described herself to a crowd this week, "sassy." When she takes the stage, reporters exchange knowing glances, double-check their recording equipment, and prepare to scribble furiously. This week's gift to the staged monotony of John Kerry's "Believe in America" tour was Heinz Kerry's instantly famous retort to pro-Bush hecklers trying to disrupt a picturesque Kerry rally at a park in downtown Milwaukee.

Most newspaper and TV accounts the next morning didn't note it, but moments before the flare-up, Heinz Kerry was telling the crowd about standing up against bullies and oppressors, specifically in apartheid South Africa. "It's important in life to take a stand," she said, "whether you're alone in a room or in a crowd." As if on cue, the gang of Bushies in the distance began their bullhorn chant of "four more years." She seemed to make the connection between the protesters and what she had just said. How could she not take a stand? "They want four more years of hell," she shouted to thunderous cheers. The crowd then responded with a witty chant of "three more months," which she gamely picked up and began reciting herself.

The Bush-Cheney campaign organized a conference call the next day, ostensibly to unveil a new TV ad. But Bush campaign aides phoned some reporters and let it be known that they should ask about Kerry's quip last night. Speaking after his wife, Kerry pointed to the Bushies and said, "I want to thank George W. Bush for sending the goons here tonight to excite us to do a little more work." The Bush campaign is trying to claim Kerry's comment undercuts his pledge to run a positive campaign. Please. Republicans would have attacked Kerry if he hadn't come to his wife's defense. If Kerry supporters tried to shout down the first lady at a Bush rally—if they weren't taken away in handcuffs, as seems to happen these days to Bush protesters—don't you think Bush would have a sharp word or two for them?

Anyway, it doesn't seem the "goon" comment augurs an uptick in sharp rhetoric from Kerry about Bush. The next day, Kerry showed his new policy book, *Our Plan for America*, to an audience in Wisconsin. Seeing some glossy color pictures in it, a supporter yelled, "Those are for Bush?" Kerry chuckled but said no.

IRAQ'D

SPENCER ACKERMAN

LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS: Kerry announced on the chat shows last Sunday that he doesn't intend to send more American troops to Iraq and that he would consider his Iraq policy unsuccessful if he didn't bring "significant numbers of troops back within the first term."

Kerry linked the return of American troops to an infusion of foreign soldiers, which, for a year now, has been his panacea for Iraq. Kerry argued Sunday that our allies' opposition to sending troops stems from their animus toward the Bush administration—and, therefore, the election of a new administration would bring an end to their opposition. This strikes me as a case of wishful thinking reminiscent of the most fevered Bush administration delusions. Kerry is expecting, essentially, that the Europeans, liberated from Bush, will greet him with sweets and flowers. While I'd like that to be true, consider this troublesome quote from Philip Gourevitch's recent Kerry profile in *The New Yorker*.

> European resistance to the Iraq mission was stubborn from the outset, and an influential European diplomat in Washington told me, "If what John Kerry says today is that he thinks that Europeans could drag that car out of the mud now, I believe this is not a realistic expectation." European leaders would certainly welcome a change of American Presidents, but they have their own elections to think about, and it is not clear that they would make much of a sacrifice for the new man. "Because of how it's been handled so far, Iraq is really not a good case to demonstrate the great advantages of transatlantic cooperation," another diplomat said to me. "It is actually the worst possible case. Iraq is simply too much of a mess."

Perhaps some of this opposition could be overcome by a new administration. Even Bush, to his credit, has been able to nudge NATO toward training Iraqi security forces.

But, as that anonymous diplomat suggests, the Europeans just might not want to be drawn into what they consider a bloody and misguided enterprise with no end in sight—not because they're lily-livered enemies of freedom (as Bush believes) or because they're frothing Bush-haters (as Kerry believes), but because they simply see the costs of intervention exceeding the potential benefits to their interests.

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Campaign Journal

Fall Guys

BY RYAN LIZZA

BELOIT, WISCONSIN

A RUNNING JOKE ON the campaign bus is that John Kerry is in danger of killing more voters than he's persuading. As his caravan rolls across the country from the Boston convention to the West Coast—from "sea to shining sea," as it says on Kerry's bus—an inordinate number of people are collapsing at Kerry-Edwards events. The crowds at the campaign rallies have been huge—up to 20,000 strong—and, after waiting hours in the hot sun for the chronically late bus convoy, at least one person at every stop winds up on a stretcher. During an event at a boarded-up Big Lots store in Springfield, Ohio, I ask a Kerry aide about the trail of devastation her boss is leaving in the Ohio River Valley. "It's because we have unprecedented support among the senior community," she quips. Seconds later, as if on cue, an elderly battleground-state resident hits the pavement. "Uh-oh," says the aide. "We lost another voter."

The bus caravan is a surreal monstrosity. At times, Kerry and John Edwards move across the country with as many as 30 vehicles. They travel in separate campaign buses, with Kerry in a noticeably nicer one than his running mate. Four buses of reporters trail them, along with a staff bus for Kerry's aides and a VIP bus for traveling celebrities like Ben Affleck. Numerous other police, Secret Service, and staff cars are mixed into the motorcade. There's also a black pickup truck with a satellite dish attached to it that pulls down an Internet connection and wirelessly beams it to laptops in the rest of the fleet. Police vehicles constantly whiz by us as they race ahead to close off on-ramps, clearing a vast stretch of traffic wherever we roam.

Whether the backdrop for a Kerry event is a riverfront and suspension bridge in Wheeling, West Virginia, a picturesque downtown in Bowling Green, Ohio, or a small-town baseball diamond straight out of *Field of Dreams* in Taylor, Michigan, the stages are always well-lit, the voters are always smiling, and the dual-camera risers for both straight and cutaway shots are always expertly placed. But the staging goes beyond the event sites themselves. The entire cross-country route has been turned into a stage. On overpasses, at rest stops, and at state welcome centers, there is a kaleidoscope of Kerry-Edwards signs and supporters. From the press buses, it looks like a series of spontaneous bursts of enthusiasm, but it's all preplanned. Campaign documents lay out in detail the "visibility" events at every stage of the trip. In Massachusetts, on day one, "5 overpasses right in a row coming out of Boston" are occupied by photo-ready Kerry supporters. As the buses cross into the Democratic stronghold of Pennsylvania's Lackawanna County, the game plan calls for a sign noting that the area is "Kerry country." Even "homemade" signs aren't homemade anymore: "We will be placing banners on all of the Blue Mountain tunnels—homemade signs," the document notes. And, on day two, when we dip down into Wheeling, in West Virginia's northern panhandle, on the "entrance into town there will be a bridge with banners welcoming the ticket to WV."

JUST BECAUSE EVERYTHING is stage-managed doesn't mean the enthusiasm in the crowds isn't real. Asked what he thought Kerry's convention speech accomplished, one aide said it had turned anti-Bush feelings into pro-Kerry ones. It sounds like spin—especially coming just eight hours after the speech—but, among the voters on the trail and in post-convention polls, there is a detectable uptick in intensity of support for Kerry. For every anti-Bush voter, such as 66-year-old Ohioan Becky Hines, who waited by the side of Interstate 70 for three hours to see Kerry—"Because I've been screwed by President Bush and have to pay way too much for my drugs"—there seem to be many more along Kerry's rope lines who have formed a bond with the senator. "He represents the middle class; that's what I am," said a 70-year-old man at a stop Kerry made in southwestern Wisconsin. "You were brilliant," Robin Shipman told the candidate at a Baumgartner's cheese shop in Monroe, Wisconsin. The basic goal of this trip is to continue this process of conversion.

It's not clear the same kind of campaign-trail bonding is developing between Kerry and his running mate. Watching them interact onstage at several events, there's little evidence they have become the sort of buddies that Bill Clinton and Al Gore supposedly became on their post-convention bus tour in 1992. While Teresa Heinz Kerry and Elizabeth Edwards introduce each other with warm anecdotes that suggests they've gotten to know and like each other, their husbands' knowledge of one another seems limited to their primary campaigns' respective clichés. Edwards talks mostly in boilerplate language about Kerry's Vietnam service. Kerry awkwardly refers to his running mate as a "son of a mill worker," as in "this son of a mill worker is ready to lead!" Their styles are extremely different. Edwards can seem rehearsed to the point of phoniness, while Kerry often wings it, groping from stump line to stump line. Once, when Edwards briefly departed the tour Sunday night for a solo trip to the South, Kerry seemed noticeably more on his game.

But the point of picking Edwards was not for Kerry to find a new best friend. When Edwards was on the trip, the duo drove deep into territory that Bush won in 2000. On the first day of the tour, Kerry spoke to a wild crowd of some 20,000 people on the state capitol grounds in Harrisburg. The central Pennsylvania city is in Dauphin County, which Bush won by nine points in 2000 and which no Democratic presidential candidate has carried since LBJ wal-

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loped Barry Goldwater in 1964. On Saturday, Kerry and Edwards held rallies in a pair of counties that voted Republican in 2000 for the first time since 1972 (Pennsylvania's Westmoreland County) and 1988 (West Virginia's Ohio County). The bus tour ended the day in Zanesville, Ohio, in Muskingum County, which no Democrat has won since 1964 and where Bush beat Gore by 14 points. The next day, before Edwards peeled off, the two spoke to a downtown crowd in Bowling Green, Ohio, in Wood County, a place that Clinton carried twice but that Gore lost by nine points.

In these places, the emphasis is on guns, God, and the flag. Zanesville is one of only two stops where the Pledge of Allegiance is said. In Wheeling, John Edwards makes a point of reminding the crowd, "Y'all talk a little like I do." It's in these areas that Kerry reminds the audience that he's been hunting and fishing since he was a little boy. The forays into Bush country are one of the most tangible signs of the strength of the Kerry campaign right now. The trips don't appear to be feints. The economy and the war have left Bush with weakened support among rural voters that Kerry is improbably poised to exploit. In a recent memo, Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg noted, "A remarkable 45 percent of these white rural voters want to go in a significantly different direction than Bush (versus just 52 percent who want to continue on the same path); a like number, 49 percent, of these white male seniors feel the same (with 47 percent wanting to continue to follow Bush). ... The Kerry campaign has plenty of opportunities to erode Bush's performance with these voters and jeopardize [Karl] Rove's base strategy."

But, despite the campaign's disciplined stage-managing and strategic savvy, there are some kinks that become obvious after spending a week aboard the Kerry bus. It took Kerry a week of tinkering and working with his traveling speechwriter before he started to nail his roughly 30-minute stump speech, which he's still trying to whittle down by ten minutes. "I told him tonight," says an aide, " 'You got to stop throwing in your twenty best lines.' Kerry likes to squish it all in. He's testing. He's doing his own focus group of what works and what he wants to use."

Moreover, the press is starting to grumble, resentful of how the campaign limits access to the candidate. In front of some audiences, Kerry promises that, as president, he will hold at least one press conference each month. But, on the trail, he's falling a little short of that standard. Reporters traveling with him say he's held just two short press "availabilities" in the last month, at which a total of six questions were asked. After we had waited at one event site for over an hour, Kerry called the press together and said, "Unfortunately, because of the schedule, we only have time for a couple of questions. I apologize about that." Other reporters are ticked off that events open to the public are closed to all but a small pool of reporters. In one Wisconsin town, the press is stopped by a Secret Service agent while residents are waved on to see Kerry speak and greet voters.

But the campaign is less interested in what the cynical, quick-to-complain national press thinks than what local reporters have to say. Aides are a little peeved that the "elites," as they call the national press corps, have been downplaying the size of Kerry's crowds in their coverage and focusing on off-message moments, such as the time Kerry called a group of Bush supporters "goons." Six days into the trip—as if to say, here's what really matters—aides distribute a packet of information detailing the phenomenal treatment Kerry is receiving from the local media. There was "proactive coverage in the five largest markets in Pennsylvania." The West Virginia stop was "carried live in five markets across the state." In Ohio "the campaign maximized coverage" in Toledo and Dayton "without actually campaigning in those cities." Impressive, and, for the elderly of Toledo and Dayton, far safer. ■

Phnom Penh Dispatch

Trading Up

BY SHERIDAN PRASSO

IT IS A Saturday afternoon on the industrial outskirts of Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, on the eve of a holiday. Thousands of Cambodia's 250,000 garment workers are boarding open-air trucks bound for their home provinces. They pile in excitedly, standing hip to hip for their long journeys, carrying jewelry, scarves, and other gifts for families and friends—items purchased by sewing clothes for Abercrombie & Fitch, Adidas, Ann Taylor, Gap, Kmart, The Limited, and other lesser-known multinationals.

But these are not sweatshop workers. By local standards, they are well-paid, and they enjoy working conditions certified by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as being in "substantial compliance" with the highest labor standards. "God has blessed me," says Chean Vanna, a 34-year-old widow who feeds her three children and elderly mother on the $50 per month she earns drawing fabric patterns. "It is better to work in a factory than a rice field."

Five years ago, these jobs didn't exist: Cambodia is the testing ground for an unprecedented trade experiment. In 1999, the United States and Cambodia signed an agreement linking U.S. garment quotas to ILO-certified improvements in working conditions in Cambodian factories. The more Cambodia improved its labor conditions, the more access it would have to U.S. markets. Nothing so explicitly linking market access to good labor practices had ever been tried before. And it has not been tried since: The Bush administration opposes such linkages, so Cambodia was the last of

Sheridan Prasso is a contributing editor for BUSINESSWEEK.

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such trade deals. Agreements signed by the Bush administration with Morocco and with five Central American countries merely have each side pledging toothlessly to "strive to improve" their labor standards without any specific incentives or penalties. That's a shame, because Cambodia's test case has been, for the most part, a success story—not only economically, but morally as well.

WHEN CAMBODIA INKED its deal with the United States, many trade experts doubted whether it was wise policy to force a poor country to undertake a drastic overhaul of its labor standards. In the trade deal's early years, in fact, it seemed more destabilizing than beneficial. As emboldened workers organized into unions, Cambodia suffered a dramatic increase in labor-management acrimony, resulting in strikes and violence that damaged the country's reputation with foreign investors. In addition, making the improvements in working conditions required by the ILO increased manufacturing costs. The garment manufacturers' association had to cover part of the cost of paying for ILO monitors (with their initial start-up fee of $200,000), and factories were required to spend the money to bring operating lines up to higher standards. Such problems may have deterred investors desiring cheaper, more compliant labor forces, and some built factories in Indonesia, Vietnam, or Bangladesh instead.

But, for other garment manufacturers, the value of a good labor practices certification was worth the slightly higher costs. Brands like Nike and Gap, both of which came under fire during the 1990s for selling clothes made in sweatshop conditions, wanted to overcome their negative reputations with consumers. And buying from Cambodia brought better p.r. "The beauty is that we're the only ones who can walk up to corporate America and say, ... 'We don't have five million laborers like China, but we have a safe haven for labor, we don't have sweatshops,' " says Cambodia's Secretary of State for Commerce Sok Siphana. Indeed, with huge volumes of garment purchases from companies like Nike, Cambodia has tripled these annual exports since the agreement was signed. According to government figures, 97 percent of its exports in 2003 were garments, accounting for one-third of its gross domestic product, and 66 percent went to the United States. The government reports that Cambodia's economy grew by 6.3 percent in 2001 and by 5.2 percent in 2002.

This growth has helped average Cambodians. Two hundred fifty thousand former poor rice farmers like Vanna now have jobs paying between $45 and $90 per month in a country where civil servants make, on average, $34.50. The money Vanna and others send back to their home provinces sustains entire families; today, government statistics show that 25 percent of Cambodia's population depends on the $15.8 million per month in wages paid to these garment workers.

Labor disputes still remain a problem and spill over into other industries: In April, the Raffles hotel chain, which owns two luxury hotels in Cambodia, fired some 300 striking workers who are currently agitating for job reinstatement. Still, the garment pact has helped teach Cambodians how to stand up for their rights—the country now has more than 200 labor unions—and many managers have gotten used to workers being organized. In general, although there is some agitation for wage increases, labor-management relations are better than they were when the agreement was inked. On the whole, says Siphana, the trade experiment has benefited Cambodia. "It does work for us," he says. "But it was not a walk in the park. ... Other countries who want to do this had better think hard about how they will manage. If they don't have the [ability] to manage strong labor, it will fail."

CAMBODIA STILL FACES obstacles. In January 2005, the World Trade Organization (WTO) will remove all quotas on textiles. Cambodia hopes to join the WTO by then. If it does, it will face direct competition for Western markets with textile giant China—without the protection of quotas. "The garment sector here has maybe three to five years before the good things are swamped by all the other things going on here," says one Western diplomat in Phnom Penh. "Unless Cambodia makes long-term changes to its infrastructure, its roads and ports, its power grid, its bureaucracy and corruption, all this is going to go away."

He has a point. Infrastructure problems and corruption in Cambodia increase costs to manufacturers. The country has just one narrow road leading to its sole deep-water port in the city of Sihanoukville. It costs roughly $2,000 more in Cambodia to export a container by sea, the diplomat says, more than in most other Asian nations, and it takes six times as long. Worse, Cambodia's electricity rates are among the highest in the world, and the country still suffers from political instability. Elections held in July 2003 resulted in a stalemate that left the country without a functioning government until earlier this summer. These difficulties have scared off some foreign investors. In 2001, they pledged $150 million; in 2003 they pledged only $135 million.

And Cambodia has another looming problem: 60 percent of its 12 million people are under 20 years old. "Stasis is not going to work when you'll have several hundred thousand people seeking to join the job market year after year after year," argues the diplomat. "In 2008, you might have as many new job seekers in that year alone as you have current employment in all of the garment sector. Where are they going to work?"

That's a question with no easy answer, especially if garment manufacturers fed up with Cambodia's other problems decide to go elsewhere. "We want these factories to continue here for a long time," says Hum Srey Neun, a 21-year-old garment worker from central Cambodia. If they do, the Cambodian model could one day transform the garment industry around the world. ■

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Has TNR's prediction come true?

July Surprised

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN, MASSOUD ANSARI, AND JOHN B. JUDIS

On July 29, Faisal Saleh Hayyat, Pakistan's interior minister, announced the arrest of a high-ranking Al Qaeda figure on local television. After a tense standoff in Gujrat, a city some 100 miles southeast of Islamabad, Pakistani security forces had captured the Tanzanian jihadist Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, the FBI's twenty-second "Most Wanted" terrorist and a suspected conspirator in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. A proud Hayyat dubbed the arrest "another crowning success of Pakistan's security apparatus in the fight against terrorism." But it is doubtful Hayyat was really addressing his fellow Pakistanis: He made the announcement at midnight. More likely, his intended audience was half a world away—in the United States, where, in the middle of the afternoon, John Kerry was preparing to deliver his nomination speech to the Democratic National Convention.

While media coverage of the capture didn't exactly overshadow Kerry—Ghailani isn't Osama bin Laden—the announcement's timing seemed suspicious. Ghailani wasn't apprehended on July 29 at all, but rather four days earlier. Last month, THE NEW REPUBLIC reported that the Bush administration was pressuring the Pakistanis to deliver a "high-value target" (HVT) in time for the November elections ("July Surprise?" July 19). According to an official with Pakistan's powerful Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), a White House aide told ISI chief Ehsan ul-Haq during a spring visit to Washington that "it would be best if the arrest or killing of [any] HVT were announced on twenty-six, twenty-seven, or twenty-eight July," during the convention. When asked this week if the announcement of Ghailani's capture on July 29 confirmed TNR's reporting, National Security Council spokesman Sean McCormack told the *Los Angeles Times*, "There is no truth to that statement."

But some American and Pakistani intelligence and counterterrorism officials do question the timing of the announcement. After his arrest, Ghailani's Pakistani captors, with assistance from FBI officials, set to work getting him to talk. While they had little initial success, a source privy to the interrogations says, "It might have taken awhile, but he would ultimately have broken down," at which point Ghailani might well have shared information, such as the names of Qaeda associates, that the Pakistanis could have acted on. But, before that could happen, according to an ISI officer, FBI officials, who had initially insisted on keeping the arrest secret, told officials in Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's government that Islamabad should announce Ghailani's capture. An ISI official explains, "When it comes to matters especially pertaining to Al Qaeda, it is always the U.S. administration that takes most of the decisions, while the Pakistani government simply plays the role of a front man." This official and another ISI official believe that the driving factor behind the announcement was U.S. politics. "What else could explain it?" the second official says.

Though there is no policy governing how long to keep such arrests secret, standard intelligence practices dictate that the capture should not have been made public until investigators had finished with Ghailani (and the laptop and computer disks he had been captured with). Indeed, Ghailani may still talk, but some current and former American officials fear that, by broadcasting his name around the world, the Pakistanis have reduced the value of the intelligence that interrogators can extract from him. "Now, anything that he was involved in is being shredded, burned, and thrown in a river," a senior counterterrorism official told the *Los Angeles Times*. "We have to assume anyone affiliated with this guy is on the run ... when, usually, we can get great stuff as long as we can keep it quiet." Adds former CIA operative Robert Baer: "It makes no sense to make the announcement then. Presumably, everything [Al Qaeda] does is compartmented. By announcing to everybody in the world that we have this guy, and he is talking, you have to assume that you shoot tactics. To keep these guys off-balance, a lot of this stuff should be kept in secret. You get no benefit from announcing an arrest like this. You always want to get these guys when they are on vacation, when they are not expecting you."

In fact, Al Qaeda has a history of adapting to intelligence penetrations. In 1998, a leak to *The Washington Times* detailing "an intelligence bonanza" from intercepted cell phone calls made by bin Laden and his cohorts resulted in the abrupt abandonment of the phones—and the end of the bonanza. Some CIA counterterrorism officials believe the premature announcements of the arrests of important Qaeda terrorists like Abu Zubaydah and Tawfiq bin Attash limited the value of the information they possessed about their comrades, who are believed to discard cell phones and e-mail addresses every two or three days. Daniel Benjamin, a counterterrorism official in the Clinton administration, says he doesn't know all the facts behind Ghailani's arrest, but he observes, "If you have that much stuff on a guy, I would think you would want to keep it quiet for awhile to follow up all the leads."

And there could well be leads to follow up, just as there were after the apprehension of Qaeda associates Musaad Aruchi in Karachi on June 12 and Muhammed Naeem Noor Khan in Lahore on July 13. Both suspected terrorists were

Massoud Ansari reported from Gujrat, Pakistan. John B. Judis is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

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captured along with laptops, computer disks, and maps indicating surveillance of U.S. installations in preparation for an attack, and their information led investigators to Ghailani—and contributed to the announcement of this week's Code Orange alert. "There is not a single significant Al Qaeda arrest that didn't yield us more," a senior Pakistani intelligence official told *The Washington Post*. But the arrests of Aruchi and Khan were kept secret for weeks—until reporters started investigating the Ghailani capture. "I'm definitely cynical enough to believe the timing [of these announcements] is always political," says a recently retired intelligence official. "I think the timing of a success announcement or a failure announcement is always optimized as much as whoever controls it can optimize it." But American and Pakistani security officials remain skeptical as to what the Ghailani announcement really optimized—the war on terrorism or George W. Bush's reelection campaign. ■

The so-called "good" economy.

False Positive

BY JACOB S. HACKER

As election day approaches, the Bush campaign seems baffled by the continued reluctance of voters to credit the president for the past year's generally positive economic numbers. On the campaign trail in Ohio last week, President Bush insisted, "The economy is strong, and it's getting stronger." But, according to recent polls, most Americans believe the economy is getting worse or just holding steady, and the number who approve of Bush's economic stewardship has dropped significantly from the beginning of the year.

Pundits have offered plenty of reasons to explain—or, more accurately, to explain away—voters' continuing grumpiness. Until recently, the favored line was that voters simply had not woken up and smelled the economic coffee. Yet, public perceptions of the economy have remained remarkably negative, and they continue to be down sharply from earlier this year.

It's time to embrace a simpler thesis: Voters say the economy isn't getting better because, as far as they're concerned, it's not. And perhaps the best explanation for this perception is that Americans are facing rising economic insecurity even as basic economic statistics improve. In March, for example, unemployment and inflation were both low. But roughly half of Americans agreed that "America no longer has the same economic security it has had in the past," while another fifth thought the statement could be true in the future. By contrast, just 27 percent believed the poor conditions of recent years represent merely the normal downside of the business cycle.

This pervasive public anxiety is the main reason that usually sunny Americans are cloudy about their families' economic futures. It may also explain why voters have proved increasingly skeptical of good economic numbers—not just in this election, but also in 1992 and 1994, when, on paper, the economy was not nearly as bad as voters thought it was. Put simply, the statistics pundits love to cite don't capture what most Americans feel: an increasing financial pinch that is putting them at ever greater economic risk.

To Democrats, of course, it's an article of faith that Americans are struggling. At their convention last week, speaker after speaker decried Bush's "middle-class squeeze"—the economic strains on families caught between stagnant earnings and rising living costs. Vice presidential candidate John Edwards spoke of "Americans who work hard and still struggle to make ends meet." John Kerry invoked the middle class no fewer than eight times in his 50-minute acceptance speech, calling for "an America where the middle class is not being squeezed, but doing better."

The strains are certainly real. As Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Warren and her daughter, Amelia Tyagi, have documented, middle-class families confront rising difficulties meeting basic expenses—such as housing and tuition—and they are going deeper and deeper into debt as a result. They are also working longer: According to Karen Kornbluh of the New America Foundation, the typical family spends 22 more hours per week at work than it did in 1969.

Yet, the income squeeze that families face is not exactly the same as insecurity. Insecurity is something larger—the risk of large drops in living standards caused by loss of income or catastrophic expense. And, my research suggests, insecurity is something that more and more Americans, even the relatively well off, are confronting.

The signs are everywhere. Fourteen million more Americans lack health insurance now than two decades ago. Meanwhile, corporations have abandoned "defined-benefit pensions" that offer a fixed payment in retirement in favor of more risky "defined-contribution" plans like 401(k)s. And, according to Princeton economist Henry Farber, the effect of job loss on work hours, pay, and prospects for reemployment has worsened substantially since the 1980s. Indeed, in area after area, there's evidence of a vast shift in the economic security of most Americans—a massive transfer of financial risk from corporations and the government onto families and individuals.

This great risk shift has gone surprisingly underreported. Though we've heard about economic hardship, most of the

Jacob S. Hacker is the Peter Strauss Family assistant professor of political science at Yale and a fellow at the New America Foundation. He is finishing a book on economic insecurity, THE GREAT RISK SHIFT.

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stories concern static measures—poverty, inequality, wages, joblessness. That's in large part because no standard economic statistic tries to assess the stability of family income. We know with great precision how many Americans are rich and poor at any moment and how large the gap is between the bottom and the top. But we know next to nothing about the extent to which their economic status changes over time or what causes these shifts.

In response, I have spent the last couple of years trying to assemble new figures on changes in family income, aided by Professor Nigar Nargis of the University of Dhaka. Our research has centered on the Panel Study of Income Dynamics—a nearly 40-year project that tracks the same families from year to year and, hence, provides unique insights into how and why incomes change over time.

What has become clear from this research is that family incomes rise and fall a lot—far more than one would suspect just looking at income-distribution figures. As a result, a surprisingly big chunk of U.S. income inequality—perhaps as much as half—is due to transitory shifts of family income, rather than permanent differences across families.

This is a point conservatives love: Sure, inequality is growing, they argue, but mobility is alive and well, making any comparison of income groups misleading. But this conclusion is as wrongheaded as the image of a frozen class structure that liberals sometimes take from income-distribution statistics. Upward mobility is real, but it's usually not dramatic, and nothing suggests it has increased significantly in the era of rising inequality.

Plus, conservative paeans to social mobility miss an even more glaring problem: What goes up also goes down. And, for most Americans, downward mobility is far more painful than upward mobility is pleasurable. In the 1970s, the psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman gave a name to this bias—"loss aversion." Most people, it turns out, aren't just highly risk-averse—they prefer a bird in the hand to even a very good chance of two in the bush. They are also far more cautious when it comes to bad outcomes than when it comes to good outcomes of exactly the same magnitude. The search for economic security reflects a basic human desire to guard against losing what one already has.

JUDGED ON THIS basis, what my evidence shows is deeply troubling. When I started out, I expected to see a rise in the instability of family income. But nothing prepared me for the sheer magnitude of the increase. At its peak in the mid-'90s, income instability was almost five times as great as it was in the early '70s, and, although it dropped somewhat during the late '90s (my data end in 1999), it has never fallen below twice its starting level. By comparison, permanent income differences across families have risen by a more modest, if still troubling, 50 percent over the same period.

The full explanation for this dramatic rise in instability is still unclear, but two causes loom large. The first, and most obvious, is changes in the nature of work. In today's post-industrial economy, less skilled workers are much more vulnerable than when unionized, manufacturing labor was more of the norm. (Not surprisingly, instability is greater for families headed by less educated workers, though it has actually risen more quickly in the last decade for workers who went to college.) Workplace benefits, such as health insurance and pensions, have been on the chopping block. And corporate America increasingly relies on part-time, contingent, and contract workers—all of whom enjoy precious little security.

The second overarching cause of increased insecurity is a shift we often take for granted: the movement of women from home to work. As mothers have entered the labor force in increasing numbers, families have gained a second income, which most desperately need. But they've also had to take on new expenses and face the increased job insecurity of having two family members in the workforce.

A stunning finding from my research illustrates this double-edged effect: When adjusted to account for the expenses a family of a given size incurs, a family's total income actually *falls* when a couple starts living together. That's not, of course, because families in which there are two potential earners receive less in earnings. It's because they are likely to receive less in public benefits and to pay more in taxes just as their family size increases—and so their overall economic standing drops. Divorce and separation obviously aren't good for income security. But it turns out that marriage and cohabitation aren't a guarantee of it either.

All this reveals a truth often forgotten amid talk of "family values": The United States has never done much to deal with the income risks that come from having both mom and dad in the workforce—from child care costs, to the need for time off to have kids and care for sick family members, to the increased risk to accustomed standards of living that plague families dependent on two jobs. We live in a twenty-first century economy dominated by two-earner families. Yet, social protections for working Americans have changed remarkably little since the mid-twentieth century—and, when they have changed, they have usually been cut, not expanded.

THIS ISN'T A coincidence, of course. The last two decades have witnessed a revival of the American credo of personal responsibility, championed by conservatives as an all-purpose tonic to every social ill. Bush voiced the credo while criticizing Kerry in May: "My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against giving patients more control over their medical decisions through health savings accounts, against pro-

&c.

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viding parents more choices over education for their children, against tax relief for all Americans. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over their own lives." To the extent government has any role to play in this everyone-on-their-own vision, it is limited to giving people tax breaks to encourage them to save and invest on their own.

Not surprisingly, then, spending on social programs has barely budged over the past two decades, but private-sector spending, subsidized by hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for retirement and health benefits received disproportionately by the well-off, has grown at a much faster clip. Indeed, private expenditures on such benefits now represent more than one-third of all U.S. social spending—an amount that, if added to public spending, would make the American welfare state larger than Denmark's.

And, in fact, in the current campaign, Bush has been calling for a radical acceleration of this trend, integrating his previous proposals for partial privatization of Social Security and Medicare into a larger package of initiatives to wean Americans from their dependence on public programs. The shift is embodied in the campaign's recent theme of an "ownership society"—a shameless appropriation from left-leaning law professors Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, whose 1999 book, *The Stakeholder Society*, outlined a $255 billion plan for giving all children a government-financed trust fund—in effect, making every kid a trust-fund baby.

Bush's more plutocratic notion of ownership has two parts. The first is reform of existing social programs to increase reliance on the private sector. Although Bush's plan for private accounts in Social Security stalled in his first term, he reportedly plans to revive it during his second. And Bush has already won some of his goals for Medicare reform in the recent prescription-drug legislation—which throws huge new subsidies at the private sector in an effort to increase the role of private health plans within the program.

The second aspect of Bush's ownership society is a bevy of new tax-free accounts for everything from medical care to retirement savings to education. The idea is to encourage Americans to leave behind the semi-socialistic risk-pooling of corporate benefit plans and public programs in favor of socking away their own money. Like his tax cuts, Bush's "ownership society" would be a costly boon to the well-off, who not only save the most, but also get the largest tax breaks when they do. (Instead of making every kid a trust-fund baby, Bush has a program mainly designed to help trust-fund babies.) Worse, crippling private-sector risk-pooling and further encouraging the wealthy to disdain the public sector would make the problem of insecurity much more severe.

Conservatives demand a go-it-alone world of personal responsibility. Yet, the truth is that Americans can't cope with insecurity on their own. Private insurance often works well, but it has inherent drawbacks in dealing with big economic risks. Profit-making insurers simply can't offer reasonably priced protection to high-risk groups, provide affordable insurance for the less affluent, or require that everyone has coverage. Only government can.

This is not a radical or new idea. It's called social insurance, and it's already embedded in America's two most cherished programs, Social Security and Medicare. We now think of Social Security as a soft-headed social measure. Back in 1935, however, it was seen as the cornerstone of a system of basic financial security that was essential to making capitalism work. That's why the original name for the legislation was the Economic Security Act.

TODAY, WE NEED an Economic Security Act for American families. It should begin with the preservation of existing social insurance programs. But it cannot end there. According to University of Pennsylvania social policy expert Julia Lynch, U.S. social programs are more skewed toward the aged than in almost any other nation. The United States doles out nearly 40 times as much per senior citizen as per child and working-age adult. The currently favored response to this imbalance is to cut spending on the aged. But, rather than slashing existing protections, we should instead work to include families in the bargain. That means spending more, of course, but it also means a system that's more family-friendly, more conducive to having kids, more hospitable to obtaining new skills—in short, more supportive of a large, productive workforce that will lessen the strain on programs for the aged. It also means a system much less imperiled by the demographic shifts that have placed Medicare and Social Security in danger.

Perhaps the most promising idea for creating such a system is a simple proposal I call "universal insurance"—a kind of umbrella insurance policy protecting families against catastrophic drops in income or budget-wrecking expenses. Premiums would be a small share of total income and payouts would be based on the decline of disposable income from its previous base, with the share of income replaced higher for lower-income families.

Universal insurance could, in turn, be coupled with a less regressive and dangerous form of personal accounts than those advocated by Bush. These tax-free accounts would help families manage unavoidable household expenses before they reached catastrophic levels. Each year—and upon the birth of children—the government would contribute small amounts to each account. These public contributions would vary inversely with income, offsetting the regressive distribution of the tax breaks.

Universal insurance would protect Americans before they fell into poverty, lessening the burden on programs for the poor and protecting the dignity of beneficiaries. From the standpoint of income protection, what matters is not whether some are rich and others are poor, but whether all Americans are protected against precipitous drops in their standards of living. Universal insurance would depart from existing social insurance programs in providing general risk protection. Its premise would be that Americans need ac-

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cess to more than existing, highly segmented programs—programs that not only leave glaring gaps, but also lack the ability to respond to a rapidly changing world of risk.

To be sure, a risk-centered economic agenda has, well, risks. For one thing, it's sure to be attacked as tax-and-spend liberalism run amok. But, against the cost, one must balance the savings. Billions in hidden taxes are currently imposed by laws that facilitate bankruptcy, mandate emergency room care, and bail out the politically sympathetic when things go bad. And our current system imposes a huge economic drain when people don't change jobs, don't have kids, or don't invest in new skills because they fear the risks of those choices.

The most powerful criticism of a risk-centered agenda, then, will be the same one the right has been trotting out for years: Risk is good. It creates incentives to work hard and climb the economic ladder. Meanwhile, protecting people against risk is bad. It creates what economists call "moral hazard," a reason to take risks we'd otherwise avoid. If government helps people deal with income losses or family crises, it will just encourage more of what it is trying to prevent.

To some extent, this is true—and that's the whole point. Corporations enjoy limited liability precisely to encourage risk-taking. As David Moss argues in his provocative book *When All Else Fails: Government as the Ultimate Risk Manager*, the state has been managing risk since the dawn of the republic, gradually extending the reach of insurance from corporations and the affluent to all Americans. Today, however, the circle of protection is shrinking rather than expanding. We still have limited liability for American corporations, but, increasingly, we have full liability for American families.

Conservatives like Bush are right that the dynamism of the U.S. economy generates huge rewards and that trying to eliminate that dynamism through regulation or protectionism would reduce those rewards. Yet, if we acquiesce to the "creative destruction" of American-style capitalism, then we also have to accept that many Americans, at one point or another, will be hit by disasters with which they cannot cope on their own. Conservatives say free markets create more winners than losers. They say helping the losers is a better way of addressing insecurity than restricting the freedom that begets it. It's time voters demand that they put their money where their mouths are. ■

The hard right's soft new face.

Lone Star

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

ON A HOT July day in a grassy park on Capitol Hill, a star was rising. The U.S. Senate had just rejected a constitutional ban on gay marriage, and Senator John Cornyn, a main proponent of the ban, was waiting to start a press conference. As usual, the Texas Republican had a gentle smile on his face. The marriage vote had been a flop for Senate Republicans, who couldn't even muster a majority for their cause, never mind the 67 votes needed to amend the Constitution. But Cornyn looked happy all the same. He'd had a starring role in the debate and spent long hours verbally dueling with Senate Democrats with decades of seniority—heady stuff for a man who arrived in Washington in January 2003. Sometimes there is glory in defeat, and now Cornyn was a minor sensation. Presently, he was surrounded by a pack of photographers, one of whose shots would land him on the front page of the next day's *Washington Post*. A stranger approached and asked to have her picture taken with him. "It's too bad we don't have *our* camera," said another nearby admirer enviously. The conservative über-activist Gary Bauer, standing a few feet away, felt all the attention was well-deserved: "He's hit a grand slam on this issue!"

Even before the marriage debate, Cornyn had fast developed a reputation as the Senate's most ambitious—and most conservative—new addition. Whereas tradition dictates that Senators quietly pay their dues and build up seniority before mouthing off, Cornyn didn't hesitate to join the Senate's toughest fights. On issues from gay marriage to judicial nominations to the detainee abuse scandals, he has taken stridently conservative stands that make even other Republicans queasy. "More and more, he seems to be the designated hitter for the right wing of the Republican Party on the most controversial issues," says Ralph Neas, president of People for the American Way.

Of course, the Senate has seen conservative firebrands before. But none as deceptively genial as John Cornyn. Standing a full six-foot-four, Cornyn has a kind, slightly bemused face above which floats a perfect cloud of puffy white hair. He speaks with a buttery soft voice, which he rarely raises in indignation. A former judge and Texas attorney general, he prefers the reasoned language of jurisprudence to harsh conservative rhetoric. Whereas congressional right-wingers—and especially Texans like Tom DeLay—often limit their appeal by acting like villains from a Michael Moore nightmare, Cornyn is genial. At the press conference on the marriage amendment, he did not fulminate over moral depravity or clumsily scorn "the homosexual agenda." Instead, he called the debate a fine chance to highlight "the traditional institution of marriage and its importance as a stabilizing influence on our society." His sunny, calm tone suggested a man of deep benevolence.

All of which makes Cornyn's ultra-conservative message easy to swallow. "He's quiet by nature and isn't excitable. So, when he does speak, you are more inclined to

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listen to what he has to say," says Cornyn's longtime friend Jim Lunz, a retired San Antonio businessman. His colleagues agree. "He's very calm and poised," adds GOP Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas. But perhaps Republican Senator Mitch McConnell put it best when he told the *Houston Chronicle* recently, "You don't get the feeling that he's overcome by passion. It's a very dispassionate approach, and I think people like that." If Tom DeLay is the stylistic equivalent of heavy metal, John Cornyn is muzak. For that reason, he could prove a major asset to a party searching for ways to seem more moderate than it is. You might say John Cornyn is coining a new political style: dispassionate conservatism.

A FEW WEEKS earlier, Cornyn was tackling another issue that had scared off many of his GOP colleagues: the torture of detainees at Abu Ghraib. Senate Democrats, led by Pat Leahy and Ted Kennedy, had been pushing a measure that would require the Bush administration to release memos detailing its interrogation policies. Republicans—who didn't want the memos out but didn't want to be on record saying so—were blocking a vote. "This is not an issue that other Republicans want to touch," a newspaper reporter covering the story that day murmured as Cornyn entered the Senate radio and TV gallery, alone, and took a lectern to refute the Democratic position. With a gentle lilt and a slight Texas twang, he argued that releasing the memos would aid terrorists. "For us to produce a policy document which states exactly what American interrogators will or will not do during the course of questioning detainees provides a road map to our enemy," he said. The continued debate over interrogation policies, he added, "is just wrong. And the only possible reason I can see that anyone would do it is to score political points. But the unintended consequence of this is to help our enemies by reducing American resolve to get actionable intelligence and to finish the job that we've started in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere." Cornyn said this without a flicker of anger or machismo, as if he was just disappointed things had come to this.

Cornyn's good-soldier role may have something to do with his connections to the Bush White House. He is particularly close to Karl Rove, who ran his winning 1996 reelection campaign for the Texas Supreme Court and convinced him to run for state attorney general two years later. When Phil Gramm gave up his Texas Senate seat in 2002, Rove again recruited Cornyn and reportedly cleared the GOP primary field for him. The president took it from there, raising millions and campaigning repeatedly for Cornyn—as did Karen Hughes, Laura Bush, and even George H.W. and Barbara Bush. "Probably no race in the nation has drawn more interest and energy from President Bush," *The New York Times* concluded that October.

Back then, Cornyn made no secret of his loyalty to Bush. It was a central theme of his campaign against former Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk. But his conservatism attracted little national attention, in part because Cornyn's style didn't set off liberal alarm bells. "He doesn't seem to stir the passions either way," University of Houston Professor Richard Murray told the *San Antonio Express-News* when Cornyn was inaugurated. "He seems to be a moderate Republican." In that respect, Cornyn's 2002 campaign is strikingly reminiscent of the 2000 presidential race, when a deeply conservative Bush used soft rhetoric and easy charm to cast himself as a centrist.

Nowhere has Cornyn's smooth style been more useful to the GOP than in the intense ongoing battle over judicial nominations. From his post on the Senate Judiciary Committee, Cornyn plunged straight into the bitter fights over judges that Democrats and Republicans have been waging for years. Cornyn initially took a folksy, Mr. Smith approach to the subject, with magnanimous calls for "a fresh start" to a "broken" confirmation process. But, given that this "fresh start" would have involved funneling through stalled Bush nominees and rewarding Republicans for blocking Democratic judges in the 1990s, Democrats didn't take kindly to the suggestion. After Cornyn made one such appeal in a hearing, the Committee's ranking Democrat, Pat Leahy, contemptuously dressed him down. "I appreciate him giving us a lecture on the history of the Senate, but let me respond as one who has been here for twenty-nine years." Leahy then rattled off extensive details about stymied Clinton nominees before acidly concluding, "But, being new here, you may not have realized that." If the scolding was meant to put Cornyn in his place, however, it failed. Before long, Cornyn was helping lead an audacious push by Senate conservatives to rewrite the body's rules and prohibit filibusters of judicial nominees—a so-called "nuclear option" that made GOP traditionalists blanch. But the White House had no complaints. As White House counsel Alberto Gonzales—another old Cornyn friend from Texas—recently told the *Houston Chronicle*, "We don't view him as a junior senator. He's been very helpful in terms of judges."

And not just judges. Upon taking his seat, he was granted the chairmanship of a Judiciary subcommittee on the Constitution—a plum perch for a freshman—and, within 18 months, he had staged hearings on no fewer than four constitutional amendments (not only on marriage, but on flag-burning, religious freedom, and the continuity of Congress after a terrorist attack). Cornyn is also a reliable mouthpiece for the most conservative—and White House–friendly—line on the issue of the day. When Senate GOP leaders recently angered the no-quarter right by cutting a deal with Democrats to confirm some Bush nominees in exchange for other concessions, Cornyn quickly declared the deal a sellout. During the 9/11 Commission hearings, it was a formal request from Cornyn, along with South Carolina's Lindsey Graham, that led to the Justice Department's release of a controversial 1995 memo written by Democratic Commissioner (and then–Deputy Attorney General) Jamie Gorelick that conservatives used to try to undermine the Commission's credibility. During the Abu Ghraib prison

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abuse scandal, Cornyn's chief complaint seemed to be that the Senate's extensive hearings on the matter were amounting to "collective hand-wringing, which can be a distraction from fighting and winning the war."

And, perhaps more than any other senator, Cornyn promotes base-pleasing, right-wing causes. Few other Republicans sought a visible role in the gay marriage fight, for instance: When Cornyn used his Judiciary subcommittee to hold a hearing on the issue last spring, only one of his colleagues, Alabama's Jeff Sessions, showed up. Likewise, when Cornyn called in Roy Moore—the former Alabama Supreme Court justice unseated last year for displaying a monument to the Ten Commandments—for a June hearing on "Hostility to Religious Expression in the Public Square," the archconservative Sessions was again the only other committee Republican in attendance.

All of which delights conservatives. "In all honesty, many of us here in Washington didn't know much about the senator when he was elected," Bauer says. "I think he's clearly established himself as a senator who's going to be a major mover and shaker in the years ahead."

JOHN CORNYN IS hardly the first conservative Senate newcomer to shun the rules of the tradition-bound institution. Beginning in the mid-'90s, an influx of conservative ideologues from the Gingrich school of take-no-prisoners political warfare joined the Senate. These insurgents—including Sessions, Rick Santorum, Jim Inhofe, and Jon Kyl—are far more conservative, and confrontational, than institutionalist predecessors like Hatch, Charles Grassley, or Pete Domenici. By bucking Senate traditions of earnest debate, bipartisan friendship, and staid decorum—many of which they see as antithetical to an aggressive conservative agenda—they've helped turn the Senate into the sort of embittered, partisan battlefield that the House has become.

But, while these new-breed conservatives have had success remaking the institution, it's come at a cost to their image—and, in some cases, their effectiveness. Consider the case of Rick Santorum. A former bomb-throwing House member, Santorum came to the Senate in 1995 with all the subtlety of an air-raid siren. In his first full month, he noisily crusaded for a balanced-budget amendment, irreverently arguing on the Senate floor with Democrats like Robert Byrd (who, as Michael Barone's *Almanac of American Politics* notes, was elected the year Santorum was born). At one point, Santorum scoffed to another veteran Democrat, Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, that he was "stupefied that the plain reading of this [bill's] language is not apparent" to him. When the 72-year-old Republican Appropriations Committee chairman, Mark Hatfield, voted against the amendment, Santorum demanded he be stripped of his chairmanship. Such episodes—combined with a shrill and sneering rhetorical style—earned Santorum a reputation for obnoxious ambition that he has spent years trying to repair.

Cornyn shares Santorum's ambition, conservatism, and disdain for Senate tradition, but not his sharp-edged style. That makes Cornyn's adversaries nervous. A senior Democratic aide says, "He's deceiving because he's far more conservative than people realize. He has very nice table manners, but he's as tough and fierce a conservative as Rick Santorum or Jeff Sessions." The difference, says the aide, is that "Santorum is smug and arrogant, and he rubs everyone—especially his own caucus—the wrong way. A lot of members of his caucus want to keep their distance from [Santorum] because he's viewed as being too extreme." Cornyn's affability, by contrast, insulates him from that sort of typecasting.

Case in point: Santorum was ridiculed last year when he invoked bestiality—"man on dog," as he famously put it—in an interview about gay marriage. Earlier this month, it seemed Cornyn had done something similar when *The Washington Post* reported that he had said in a speech to the Heritage Foundation, "It does not affect your daily life very much if your neighbor marries a box turtle. But that does not mean it is right. ... Now you must raise your children up in a world where that union of man and box turtle is on the same legal footing as man and wife." The quote quickly circulated around Washington and beyond, reaching as far as "The Daily Show" with Jon Stewart. But, as a subsequent *Post* correction noted, Cornyn never actually delivered this line. "I had a draft that I put out 'as prepared for delivery,' " says Cornyn communications director Dan Stewart. "He saw that and said, 'Noooo way!' "

It's the sort of politically wise editing conservatives like Santorum, DeLay, Trent Lott, and others lack—and it's already improving Cornyn's stock in the party. Earlier this year, Cornyn was named to the Senate GOP's vote-counting whip team. And, in a telling gesture, he was also dispatched as a GOP surrogate to the Democratic convention in Boston last week—along with a team of mostly moderate Republicans like William Weld and Rudy Giuliani. Republicans and Democrats alike expect Cornyn to climb higher. "He's become a serious player," says GOP activist Grover Norquist.

It's clear that Cornyn himself recognizes the virtue of an anodyne approach to ideological combat. "Those of us on the side of traditional marriage must not flinch," he said during the gay marriage debate. "We should not back down, and we should not allow people to paint our motivations as hateful or hurtful because, indeed, they are not." He said something similar when I sat down with him recently in an office belonging to McConnell near the Senate floor. Cornyn was wearing a dark suit whose leg he hiked up to reveal black cowboy boots with a custom U.S. SENATOR JOHN CORNYN seal. I asked him about his surprisingly gentle demeanor. "Maybe some of this goes back to my role as a lawyer," he told me. "It's not always easy, because so many of these arguments are so deeply felt, and sometimes they get downright personal. But I try my best not to let them get that way." To the chagrin of Washington Democrats, he is succeeding. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Sight and Song

NOBODY READS AN ENcyclopedia continuously and completely, not even a reviewer. A book made for reference is a different creature from a work intended to hold us throughout. This at least was the (self-invented) maxim with which I began *Encyclopedia of Opera on Screen*. But as I turned every one of the 787 double-columned, helpfully illustrated text pages (there are another ninety pages of bibliography, tape sources, and index), I found myself stopping to nibble much more often than I had expected. Before long I was fracturing my maxim. I certainly haven't read every word of Ken Wlaschin's book, but his material is so interesting, his enthusiasm so infectious, his comments so keen, that this seemingly innocent reference work becomes a diabolical trap. Who could spend the months that a thorough reading would take? Not I, regretfully. But I hope I'll need to refer to the book often.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OPERA ON SCREEN: A GUIDE TO MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF OPERA FILMS, VIDEOS, AND DVDS
By Ken Wlaschin
(Yale University Press)

Wlaschin is an American who for fifteen years was director of the London Film Festival and is now an officer of the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. He co-edited with Philip French *The Faber Book of Movie Verse* and is also a poet and novelist. He has apparently done all the work on this encyclopedia by himself. He acknowledges suggestions from many, but he mentions no collaborators or contributors, so (as with the late Ephraim Katz and the first edition of *The Film Encyclopedia*) the accomplishment, viewed simply as labor, is breathtaking. Add the work's high quality, and one's breath takes even longer to return.

Centrally the book is a guide to all the films of opera performances, complete or partial. Naturally the most popular operas have the most films and videos and DVDs to list: *Carmen* has twenty-four, followed by sixty-seven "early/related films," such as Chaplin's *Burlesque on Carmen*. Every section on an opera is much more than a list. First, there is a marvelously concise plot summary and a précis of the work's stage history. Every entry for each of the items includes facts about the production, the cast, the length of the films, and (where applicable) their availability. Frequently an entry closes with an acute critical comment on the performance and the work itself. To have put together the data for all the operas in this book must have been a Herculean clerical job. Wlaschin doesn't rest there: apparently he has seen virtually all of the films he cites and offers opinions on them. To do all this for familiar works would be heroic enough; Wlaschin also does it, for example, for Michael Tippett's *The Knot Garden*.

All this material, core of the book though it is, is only part of the treat. Woven around those entries, alphabetically of course, are biographies of composers, of singers and conductors and designers, and pithy essays on various related subjects. The book's very first entry is Lina Abarbanell, who sang the first Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Metropolitan in 1905 but is noted here because she later sang in Yiddish opera films. The last entry is the German operetta *Zwei Herzen in Dreivierteltakt* (1930), one of my first foreign-language films. (I can still sing the title song.) Under the letter X there is only one entry, *Xerxes*, and the sole comment on it is "See *Serse*," where the film of the Handel opera is discussed. We can imagine Wlaschin sighing with relief that he had at least one excuse for an X section.

Another nugget. The idea of silent films of opera seems the arch oxymoron of the ages, but such films began very soon after film was invented. Wlaschin tells us that in 1898 a two-minute version of Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment* was shot in New York. The peak in this strange field was certainly the Austrian film of *Der Rosenkavalier* done in 1926, directed by Robert Wiene, who had made *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Richard Strauss arranged the score that was to accompany the film, added a march, and himself conducted the orchestra at the premieres of the film in Vienna and London.

Operas have been composed—partially, at least—for use in films that are on other subjects. The best-known is Bernard Herrmann's *Salammbô* for *Citizen Kane*. (Kiri Te Kanawa has beautifully recorded the aria that Susan Alexander murders in the film.) But there are thirty others, ranging from the (delightful) opera-house sequence in René Clair's *Le Million* (1931) to the 2001 film about Hannibal Lecter.

I was glad to make the acquaintance of Carmine Gallone, "who specialized in opera films" and "probably made more films in the genre than any other theatrical filmmaker." He worked from 1913 to 1962 and made films of eleven operas, four biographical films about composers, and three films starring great singers. "His films," says Wlaschin, "may not be to everyone's taste, but they are made with an understanding of both cinema and opera." Oh, for a chance to sample Gallone.

Some oddities. Hans Werner Henze wrote an opera of Kleist's *Der Prinz von Homburg*, which seems a stretch in itself, and is stretched further because the opera was then filmed. William Bolcom wrote an opera called *McTeague* based on the Frank Norris novel that was the base of von Stroheim's *Greed*: it is included here because there is a documentary about it. Some of Walter Felsenstein's extraordinary opera productions, done in East Berlin but noted around the world, have been filmed. I was happy to see that Fellini squeezes into the book—on the ground that he used opera excerpts in a number of his films. After finding Fel-

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lini, I sought—and found—Nino Rota, composer of the haunting scores for several Fellini pictures, who also composed operas, one of which I once heard at Juilliard.

Some disagreements are inevitable, of course. Here are a couple. As one who cherishes many Richard Rodgers songs, I couldn't understand why he was included in a book with this title. Joseph Losey's film of *Don Giovanni* is, for me, clumsy and illogical, not the "truly great" work that Wlaschin calls it. But he justly celebrates the most wonderful opera film in my experience, Ingmar Bergman's *Die Zauberflöte*.

Open this book anywhere and something arrests the eye—if only an instance of the fact that encyclopedias, like politics, make strange bedfellows. On one page stands the titanic Feodor Chaliapin, whose Don in Pabst's *Don Quixote* is a treasure; on the facing page is *Charlie Chan at the Opera*. Oh, well. For anyone who cares about opera and film, this book is a seduction. ■

Ingrid D. Rowland

Pop Esoterica!

Leonardo da Vinci at the beach.

DESPITE PREVAILING GOSSIP in the groves of academe, people still like their Renaissance, with its prancing nymphs, striplings in hose, and Venus on the half-shell, an endless *Primavera* with Lorenzo de' Medici presiding benignly over the pagan rites. The fact that this Renaissance is a myth gives them no pause whatsoever, nor should it: the Renaissance was always a myth, and also, on occasion, a chivalric lay or an instructive fable, depending on who told the story, why, and to whom. For Angelo Poliziano, currying the favor of Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano with superabundant talent, the Medici brothers posed as modern Arthurian knights in *Stanze per la Giostra*, or *Verses for the Joust*. Botticelli, in the same years, acted as the city's great mythographer, painting glossy riddles in tempera for a restless Medici cousin, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco. If Machiavelli sent it all up with masterful cynicism in *The Prince*, he did so believing in another myth of Florence, the city as free Etruscan republic. Whatever their individual cynicism or dashed hopes, they all persisted in regarding Florence as a divinely favored place, every one.

People today still like this Renaissance of Poliziano, Botticelli, and the brothers Medici, because it stands for an idea of civilization, no matter what the poststructuralists say, and in these strange times an idea of civilization is something we desperately need. The depths of that need can be judged from the tone—and the popularity—of thrillers otherwise as disparate as *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Rule of Four*, both of which take Renaissance Florence as their shining image of civility, and quite specifically of Western civility. In a world where a rich turbaned sheik takes aim at skyscrapers, discotheques, and train stations in the name of holy war, these books argue, with their genre's implicit conservatism, that the West has contributed something more to humanity than McDonald's, cowboy pres-

THE DA VINCI CODE
By Dan Brown
(Doubleday, 454 pp., $24.95)

THE RULE OF FOUR
By Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason
(The Dial Press, 372 pp., $24)

BREAKING THE DA VINCI CODE: ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS EVERYONE'S ASKING
By Darrel L. Bock
(Nelson Books, 188 pp., $19.99)

Q
By Luther Blissett
(Harcourt, 750 pp., $26)

Ingrid D. Rowland is Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at the American Academy in Rome.

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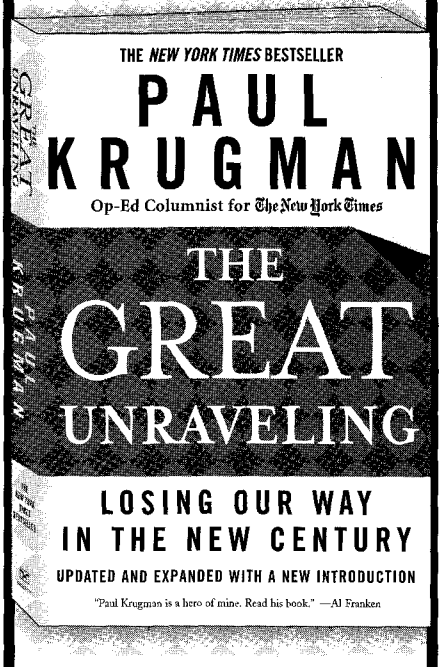
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idents, and the stock market. The extraordinary success of such pointedly cultural thrillers indicates a longing to take the Western heritage seriously, to accord it some degree of honor rather than subject it to yet another critique. This is not by any means a discouraging development.

Despite *The Da Vinci Code*'s title, however, the standing symbol of Western civility in both this best-seller and in *The Rule of Four* is not, in fact, the multifarious and frustratingly incomplete work of Leonardo da Vinci, but rather the paintings executed by his contemporary Alessandro Filipepi, whom we know by his nickname "the Little Barrel," or Botticelli. *The Rule of Four* explicitly singles out Botticelli for two reasons: one is clearly the quality of Botticelli's painting itself, with its hard-gloss tempera surfaces, sinuous lines, and crystal-clear perspectival spaces. This linear clarity is essential to Renaissance Florence, the limpidly geometric architecture of which sits solidly on a foursquare ancient Roman street plan. Leonardo moved on from Florence to foggy Milan, where his painting began to explore the interplay of light and shadow and took on the darkness, the ambiguity, the indefinable edges that make all his later work as enigmatic as Mona Lisa's smile.

Botticelli also figures in *The Rule of Four* because of what happened to him in life: some of his paintings were destroyed between 1494 and 1496 by followers of the Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola. In those years, Savonarola's disciples, called *piagnoni* or "snivelers" owing to their weepy acts of repentance, set huge bonfires of the vanities, lit to purge a society as devoted to its own version of conspicuous consumption as our own. Some of Botticelli's more licentious—that is, mythological—paintings were apparently flung into the flames along with jewelry, clothing, cosmetics, and frivolous books; and he has sometimes been identified as a *piagnone* himself. In any case, he fell victim to religious fanaticism, at least until the day when Savonarola's power-lust came to be seen as a vanity in its own right and the Florentines lit another refining fire in their main piazza, this time for the Dominican demagogue and two of his associates. (Another victim of religious zeal was Botticelli's near contemporary the great German sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider, whose hands would be broken by Lutheran fanatics—but sixteenth-century Nuremberg was swept away by events in the twentieth century as sixteenth-century Florence was not, and Riemenschneider's adversaries were not punished so neatly.)

For the authors of *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Rule of Four*, Botticelli's combination of lucid form and riddling content speaks of initiation into higher truths about humanity and civility, truths rooted in the traditions of Greece and Rome at the dawn of Western civilization, and transmitted secretly down the centuries. Thrillers, after all, thrive on secrecy, on the distinction between appearance and reality. Their most successful recent incarnation was as Cold War spy novels; and writers of thrillers, like their readers, are still searching a post-communist world for the next set of black-and-white certainties.

CHRISTIANITY, ANOTHER ESSENtial component of Western civilization, appears in a more ambiguous light. *The Da Vinci Code* centers on a secret cache of documents, guarded by a secret sect of adepts, that, if revealed, would bring down the Church—in this novel meaning Roman Catholicism—by documenting that Jesus had not died on the cross and been resurrected from the dead, but instead had moved to France with his wife Mary Magdalene to found the Merovingian dynasty of French kings and to keep alive a series of pagan mysteries that included ritual sex and cultivation of what the book's characters call, with striking pedantry, "the sacred feminine." (This complex of beliefs seems to consist of the *Mutterrecht* of the nineteenth-century mythographer Bachofen strained through the sieve of the present-day New Age goddess cult).

The Da Vinci Code would have us believe that the descendants of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and their distant scion King Clovis have been guarded since ancient Roman times by a knightly group called the Priory of Sion, whose grand masters seem to have been exclusively French except for two fifteenth-century Florentines, Sandro Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci, both of whom are said by Dan Brown to have left hints about this secret stewardship in their paintings. The evidence that he supplies for their membership in this French confraternity is so superficial that even a drowsy traveler engrossed in the action can swallow it without a thought—or without a look at an actual painting. Brown's best-known assertions in this regard have to do with Leonardo's *Last Supper*. Through the conversations of his characters (who exist more to spout instructive "facts" than to converse), Brown identifies the figure to the right of Jesus (the figure to our left) in this great, ruined fresco as Mary Magdalene, who is, according to his own claims, the wife of Christ. On the basis of this assertion, Brown claims that Jesus and his consort spell out a gigantic M with their arms and bodies. The V-shape of the space between them is presumed to refer to Mary Magdalene's womb, the figurative chalice that is the real Holy Grail, and the prime example in Western tradition of the sacred feminine.

The problem with this ad hoc iconography is that readers of *The Da Vinci Code* may come to believe that by accepting the conventionally flimsy premises of a thriller plot, they have learned something about Leonardo and his art. Brown encourages this delusion by professing at the beginning of his book that what he says is true. But in this claim, as in the rest of his narrative, he is writing fiction. As the Bible makes plain, Leonardo's blond bombshell is a man, the "Beloved Disciple" who has been resting in his Lord's bosom, identified by immemorial Christian tradition as the apostle John. Leonardo's portrayal of the Beloved Disciple as an attractive young blond fits right into the conventions of every other *Last Supper* painted in Italy in his generation. Given the villainous perversity of Brown's gay characters, all of them devoutly Catholic (the corrupt cardinal and his catamite-driver, the hit man from Opus Dei), one wonders what it is that really drives him to perform a sex change on the Beloved Disciple as embodied in Leonardo's admittedly androgynous youth. For Leonardo's famous *sfumato*, or "smoke effect," extends beyond the modeling of his figures to the very ambiguity of their being.

The fresco of the *Last Supper* once dominated one end of the dining room, or refectory, of a religious community in Milan, reminding the friars that through their faith they transformed every meal into a last supper in the presence of Jesus. There are profound historical and spiritual connections between ancient Greco-Roman sacrificial ritual and the sacrifice of the Jewish Passover, both of which together informed early Christian ritual; but what Leonardo chooses as the focus for his own version of the story is a human drama. He depicts this Passover meal at the moment just after Jesus has

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announced that one of his twelve disciples will betray him that night. Jesus lets the terrible news settle in with an expression of calm resignation, suffused with an infinite sadness that can still be seen through the painting's ravaged surface. (Leonardo, as often, had tried a new technique in this painting, and it failed to improve on the old, painstaking traditional method.) Saint Peter, hand pointed to his chest, has shot up from the table and is crying, "Who, me?" The Beloved Disciple, who has been leaning against Jesus up to now, has pulled back, faint with horror: "Not I!"

Leonardo is showing us, as he showed those Milanese friars five hundred years ago, that terror jolts us all into stark solitude. The friars would have recognized that they, too, should stand on guard against the complacency, the human weakness, that might lead them to betray their own faith in their Lord. Meanwhile, of course, Judas Iscariot has already turned his friend over for thirty pieces of silver; and Leonardo shows the guilt-ridden informer knocking over the saltcellar, the most precious object on the table. It takes more than a human spell-out ("M" is for Magdalene, "V" is for ... viscera?) to convey the dark ambiguities that stand at the heart of Leonardo's great picture.

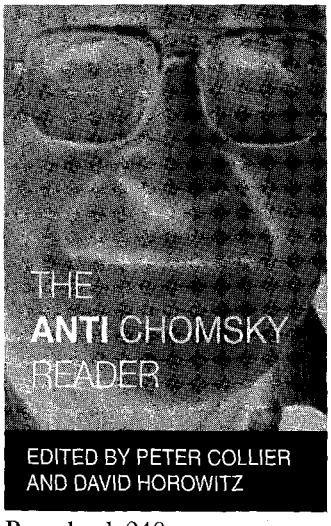
Along with its occasional forays into art history lite, *The Da Vinci Code* introduces us to the Priory of Sion's most recent grand master, whose profession is director of the Louvre, at least until his murder at the very beginning of the book. This excellent Frenchman had worked, in other words, right in front of the Leonardos and Botticellis that will gradually disclose his secret life as a hierophant of the sacred feminine to the thriller's protagonists, and to its readers. The dramatic manner of his death shows how well versed he has been in the *Last Supper*'s alphabetic arcane: bleeding to death from a gunshot wound inflicted in one of the museum's galleries, he strips naked, writes a pentagram on his belly, scrawls secret messages in fluorescent pen, and then arranges himself in the pose of a famous Leonardo drawing. The Frenchman's presence of mind—and absence of incapacitating pain—is plausible only according to the loose logic of pulp fiction.

THE RULE OF FOUR ALSO involves a secret hoard, which, like the sacred feminine in *The Da Vinci Code*, has been threatened with suppression by the Church. This time the Church is circumscribed to the time and the person of Fra Girolamo Savonarola, although the secrets targeted for suppression once again include pagan rites and abundant sex, once again hinted at by a litter of clues in Botticelli's paintings. (But then how many secrets do not involve wild sex and pagan rites, from Euripides's *Bacchae* to Edith Wharton's "Roman Fever"?) The key that enables the protagonist of *The Rule of Four* to unlock these "pagan mysteries in the Renaissance" (to borrow a phrase from the great scholar Edgar Wind) lies in a dense, beautifully illustrated novel called the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a real book that was published in 1499, although one less impossibly rare than the young authors of this thriller imply.

The chapter headings of the *Hypnerotomachia* spell out a curious acrostic that has puzzled everyone who discerns it: "Francesco Colonna Loved Polia Very Much." (Who was he? Who was she? Scholars still do not know for sure.) Working from this genuine premise, the authors suppose that the mysterious work hides a whole series of secret messages, each disguised by a different kind of fifteenth-century code. As deciphered by the novel's present-day protagonists, the messages add up to a ciphered cry for help from Francesco Colonna to his fifteenth-century readers: Savonarola and the snivelers are closing in on him. Never mind that Savonarola was incinerated a good three years before the *Hypnerotomachia*'s publication. The plot of *The Rule of Four* thus exploits the *Hypnerotomachia*'s most salient quality (after its marvelously sensuous illustrations, some of them reproduced in *The Rule of Four*): its nearly impenetrable prose, which from the beginning has either fascinated or repelled readers. Those who have soldiered on through Francesco Colonna's dense jungle of strange adjectives and slow, slow action have often read deep meaning into the text, while others, such as the sixteenth-century jurist Antonio Agustin, stopped at the sexy pictures. One disgusted reader in the sixteenth century put a warning in the flyleaf of a copy of the book now preserved in the Vatican Library: "it's a boring novel of sorts." But the pictures are not boring in the least.

Which is why the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* looks like such prime material for hiding secret messages. Nobody would write like Francesco Colonna if they could help it, including Colonna himself. The book sold poorly. But then he used "elephantine" to describe a nymph's ivory-pale leg. He called Ionic columns Doric. He was trying very hard

THE ANTIDOTE



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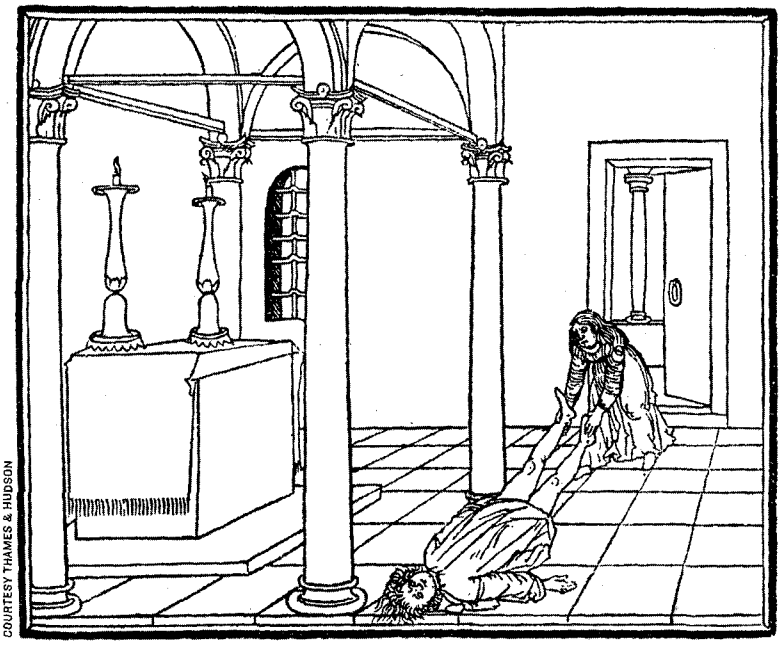
to write a beautiful and mysterious novel, so hard that the metaphorical drops of sweat plop large on every page and we seem to hear the author's indecorous groans as he strains to reach for another arcane metaphor. In the meantime, *The Rule of Four* spices the code-breaking by making it a competition among various species of cultural fauna: the drunken Princeton professor, the suave New York art dealer, the obsessive Midwestern bookseller, the obsessive undergraduate on scholarship, the graduate student (whose obsessiveness goes without saying). It often seems as if the characters' behavior is driven less by curiosity about a five-hundred-year-old steamy novel than by an immanent preoccupation with wealth and status, symbolized by membership in those Princeton eating clubs whose rites of passage may be as opaque to outsiders as the ponderous prose of the *Hypnerotomachia*.

Thrillers are a conservative genre. Like Greek tragedies and murder mysteries, they upset society's balance in order to right it, and to re-affirm it in the righting. Like Wagner's operas, they keep an unresolved chord going for hours just to set up the sheer biological joy of its final resolution. A good thriller must provide comfort after the thrill. Many people have read *The Da Vinci Code* while riding on airplanes, senses irked into a state of low-grade discomfort and dulled by oxygen deprivation, dehydration, and slipping time zones. The characters in a thriller should not grab them too insistently or they will weep into their chicken Chernobyl; the plot must obey only the logic of the jet-lagged, and no suggestion of philosophical anarchy should threaten to bring down the premises by which airline passengers continue to believe that lift plus thrust will keep them airborne to their destination.

Thus *The Da Vinci Code* may threaten to bring down the Church, but its heroes hail from other safe bastions of civilization: the Louvre, Harvard, and the police, whose members act with courage and ingenuity to keep civilization secure for ourselves and our descendants. At the same time, we learn that Leonardo and Botticelli have been sending out their own beacon of civility from Renaissance Florence, under the approving gaze of the Medici. Indeed, despite some close calls, the Church itself survives the conniving of *The Da Vinci Code*'s gay villains, both the corrupt cardinal and the hit man from the powerful and very real Catholic organization called Opus Dei. Dan Brown's most daring move is to insert a topical twist into the novel: a new pope, the successor to John Paul II, deprives Opus Dei of the favor that it enjoys in our own world under the present papacy and sets Catholicism on a new, liberal course. Now that is real re-affirmation of the social order! Quietly, all the while, the dynasty founded by Jesus and Mary Magdalene is revealed to have lived on from generation to generation, lovingly watched over by the Priory of Sion; and only a churl would note that some two and a half centuries ago the French decided to consign the divine right of kings to the guillotine.



COURTESY THAMES & HUDSON

***Drawing from the* Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, 1499**

YET IF IT IS THE THRILLER'S place to comfort souls in transit, so, too, it is the scholar's pleasure to take potshots at pretensions to historical truth in potboilers or on screen—to point out with stolid glee that, say, every fresco in *Gladiator* does not in fact need to look as if it had gone through the eruption of Vesuvius, that Roman army generals in the field were unlikely to tote around marble busts of family members, and that pitching catapults against trees is a waste of good shot (ancient war machines were designed to knock down city walls). Only this kind of unregenerate stickler, perhaps, would wonder what precisely the Priory of Sion's incriminating documents were written on, papyrus or parchment, and what kind of bureaucrat drafted them for what kind of archive; or insist that "Da Vinci" is the one thing Leonardo would never have been called in his lifetime, any more than "Of Arc" was Joan's surname. At the same time, scholarly sticklers are precisely the sorts of people that *The Da Vinci Code* praises for working (as the book might put it in characteristic breathless italics) *in the Vatican Secret Archives, the most exclusive archives in the world!* One of these indefatigable pedants even gets to be the book's hero.

Pedantry aside, *The Da Vinci Code*'s jet-lag logic also raises some more serious questions. It is difficult—no, impossible—to look upon the novel's bucolic ending, as the latter-day spawn of Jesus and Mary Magdalene fade into a Scottish sunset, without noting, like the filthy anarcho-syndicalist peasants in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, that the world no longer stands in need of sacred kingship, male or female. "I am Arthur, your king," intones Graham Chapman's Arthur in that excellent film, to which the peasants cackle: "I thought we were an autonomous collective!" Long before the advent of the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, from which *The Da Vinci Code* draws a good deal of its lore about Mary Magdalene and the Children of Jesus, Monty Python had already connected the Holy Grail to a gaggle of beautiful, lascivious women, but with tongue planted firmly in cheek; and it is hard to read some passages of *The Da Vinci Code* without thinking of Michael Palin as

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Galahad stumbling into the seraglio as the ladies berate their queen: "Oh, naughty, naughty Zoot! Time for a spanking!"

As the Pythons recognized, it is one thing to postulate a sect of divine kings in a society that includes Crusades and Knights Templar among its features, but the bloom has long since left that medieval rose, and as the final sentence in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* observes, "a withered rose will never live again." *The Da Vinci Code* should be taken for what it is: modest balm for convalescents, insomniacs, and jet travelers. It is certainly not in any real way *about* the people, the places, or the ideas that it uses for its story—though if, like the now-defunct Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles called Raphael, Donatello, Michelangelo, and Leonardo, it sparks interest in the realities of those excellent artists, it will have performed a mighty work.

The Rule of Four nurtures higher ambitions; unlike *The Da Vinci Code*, whose Harvard professor gives off only the sparest scent of the Charles River, the book is deeply rooted in another bastion of Western civilization, Princeton University, whose tortuous undergraduate rituals take on much greater reality than the putative secrets of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. In fact, the book is mostly about Princeton: about getting into your eating club, writing your senior thesis, hooking up with a partner, with an evanescent gust of Florence to shiver the clinging ivy. One wonders what would have happened if *The Da Vinci Code* or *The Rule of Four* had been set at, say, Michigan State or California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where human thought has been known to occur, and, some would assert, the institutions carry out a civilizing influence. Yet all too evidently, as these authors suggest, Western civilization, despite its name, stopped dead somewhere around Philadelphia. There is as much courtly bowing and scraping in *The Rule of Four* as there is in *Rigoletto*, without Verdi's thrilling outrage that grown men must look on in patient silence while spoiled young men disgrace themselves.

THE RULE OF FOUR IS CLEARLY a more learned thriller than *The Da Vinci Code*. It has real local detail and puzzles too intricate to solve mentally from an airplane seat. (Indeed, some of the puzzles cannot be solved at all, as they are fictitious.) For this intellectual complexity, *The Rule of Four* belongs to the same genre of action writing as *Foucault's Pendulum*, although Umberto Eco's novel is even more learned and much more clever, proving as it does that conspiracy theories eventually create their own reality, a theory that has since been proved prophetic by the new-forged "link" between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Rule of Four* also share, unwittingly, a cultural arrogance that has always been the besetting flaw of most civilized traditions. After all, life and learning for most of human history have also happened outside Princeton, outside Florence, outside Umberto Eco's personal library, and without benefit of Y chromosomes—but you would never know it from this reading list.

Like Leonardo's *Last Supper*, *The Rule of Four* takes place over Easter, a season that began at the Passover seder. It is part of the essential conservatism of thrillers that both *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Rule of Four* still feel the need to dabble in religion without confronting it except as a murky paganism or a neatly symbolic way to mark time. (*Foucault's Pendulum* makes a similarly obligatory descent on one occasion into Brazilian Santería.) But religion will not be bought off so cheaply.

In August 1427, nearly seventy years before Girolamo Savonarola started spitting fire in Florence, a skinny, toothless Franciscan preacher named Bernardino da Siena delivered a sermon to a crowd packed into the Campo, Siena's gracefully sloping public square. A local weaver took down the sermon verbatim, as he had every day since Bernardino began preaching on August 15. "I have a relic today," the famous preacher announced. "It's not the arm of Saint Bartholomew, or the Virgin's sleeve; it's something much better. In fact, it comes straight from Jesus Christ Himself, and there's enough for every one of you." Even reading between the lines, you can feel the crowd's excitement at obtaining a piece of the Lord, and the way Bernardino stokes this excitement, drawing out the suspense to a pitch of high anxiety. When the tension seems unbearable, he finally cries out, "It's the Gospel!" And the crowd groans in disappointment. The weaver records their roar, and Bernardino's reply. "Oh, oh, oh, oh! O ye of little faith! You thought you would get an easy thing to carry around."

BERNARDINO KNEW HOW DIFFICULT the Gospels were to understand, and how difficult an enterprise it was to transform their teachings into a way of life. He spent his own life trying to make their meaning plainer to ordinary people like the burghers of Siena, in sermons that provide a fascinating mix of religious dedication, compassion, and bigotry, delivered with a homespun eloquence that drew from his refined literary education as well as his years on the road. Bernardino shows that it is the difficulty of the Gospels, not their simplicity, that made them so fascinating, and so compelling: the fact that only believers ever saw the resurrected Jesus, the impossibility of understanding how a human being could also be God, the way in which women had played an indispensable part in creating the story of Jesus and in spreading it.

The Gospels were as demanding in the fifteenth century as they had been in the first, with their threats to overturn society and to transform souls, and they remain the single most reliable key to Italian Renaissance art. They are the real Da Vinci Code, and at this hard, simple news the people will groan with the same disappointment as Bernardino's public all those centuries ago. (This is the point of the Protestant Darrel L. Bock's *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*, a book whose introduction is written by a Catholic.) Disappointment or no, the best guide to understanding Leonardo's *Last Supper* remains Bernardino's relic, for Leonardo surely began with the Gospel accounts of that portentous Passover meal in Roman-occupied Judaea when he formulated his composition, as did Andrea del Castagno before him and Caravaggio afterward. The secrets that this ancient story hides are the boundless promise and unfathomable frailties of human nature, the mixture of loyalty and treachery that we all share, the real mysteries that confront us.

These are the secrets that underpinned the apparent paganism of Botticelli's mythological allegories as well as his religious subjects (the *Birth of Venus* and the *Primavera* are also probably paintings about the Virgin Mary) and the friar's tale that is the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Indeed, it was the very mixture of ancient fertility with Jewish mysticism and the Christian tale of resurrection that gave the Renaissance its beauty, and such civility as it mustered. Not necessarily

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stuff for an airplane journey or a convalescence, but nonetheless excellent sustenance for a sound mind and body.

The most compelling recent historical novel about religious strife in the Renaissance is a large novel called *Q*, written by a group of Italians who called themselves "Luther Blissett" for that occasion and are now known as "Wu Ming." (Like Monty Python's peasants, they actually are an autonomous collective.) If we really want to see what happens when religion drives believers to extremes, it is hard to do better than this vivid, terrifying portrait of a survivor of the Protestant Reformation, who travels through Europe watching societies, personalities, and every tie of civility breaking down as otherworldly certainties compel people to commit appalling acts in the here and now. The characters in *Q* bleed real blood, blood that was still soaking Europe in the trenches of World War I, and the firestorms of World War II.

Once again the tale revolves around a secret, but in *Q* it is a secret in the good old tradition of the Cold War novel: the secret of our own nature, at once so angelic and so diabolical, and so eternally out of control. Like *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Rule of Four*, *Q* has clearly been written in response to the tumults of our age, but it suggests, unlike those books, that there is no secret code to make everything right. Instead, like Bernardino's Gospel, the answers to our woes lie plain before us, accessible to all, as they have always been: the arts of coexistence, complicated, controversial, and requiring not a code-breaker's insight but a citizen's constant vigilance, laced with a Good Samaritan's instinctive compassion. ■

G.W. Bowersock
Paint Your Agon

ANCIENT GREEK ATHLETICS
By Stephen G. Miller
(Yale University Press, 288 pp., $35)

GAMES FOR THE GODS: THE GREEK ATHLETE AND THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT
By John H. Herrmann Jr. and Christine Kondoleon
(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 201 pp., $45)

IN THE WANING DAYS OF THE Roman Empire, an Athenian chronicler of Greek culture described a painting of the death of one of the greatest Olympic athletes, a certain Arrichion from Phigaleia, a small town in the mountains southwest of Arcadia. He had flourished more than six centuries earlier, but his fame was undimmed as a victor in the notorious *pankration*, a vicious "all-powerful" competition that combined boxing and wrestling in which nothing was forbidden except biting flesh and gouging eyes. When Arrichion returned after two victories to test his prowess a third time, his opponent grabbed him around the waist with one arm and undertook to break his neck with the other. Even as he was being strangled to death, Arrichion managed to throw his opponent so violently as to wrench the other man's left ankle from its socket and compel him to give up. Arrichion died, but in death he won his third victory.

Another of the renowned *pankratiasts* of classical Greece was so expert in bending back the fingers of his opponents, and sometimes breaking them, that he enjoyed an international reputation under the professional name of Sostratos Akrochersites, "the Fingerman." The morbid attraction that such heavy athletes held for at least some Greek spectators can be judged from a homoerotic poem in the *Greek Anthology* in which the poet celebrates the victory of a young boxer by kissing his bloodied face and declaring the taste of the blood sweeter than myrrh.

Welcome to the Olympic Games of ancient Greece. Greek athletes knew no greater glory than success at Olympia or at one of the three additional "crown competitions" at Delphi, Nemea (north of Argos), and Isthmia (east of Corinth). To win the crown at all four was the pinnacle of glory. It entitled a victor to be called a *periodonikes*, a winner in the entire circuit, *periodos*, of Greek games. But the Olympics held pride of place before all the others, owing to its traditional foundation date in 776 B.C.E., with Zeus himself and his consort Hera as the presiding deities.

The Olympics were the gold standard of ancient Greek athletics. They bore little resemblance to the modern Olympics, as two fine new volumes make plain. Stephen Miller surveys athletics in ancient Greece with the keen eye of a long-term excavator at Nemea and a teacher of the subject to generations of Berkeley undergraduates. John Herrmann and Christine Kondoleon offer a more limited treatment in the context of a timely exhibition, "Games for the Gods," at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Both books are well illustrated, as they need to be, but the Boston volume also includes a generous selection of photos of modern athletes doing their thing. Those images do not add much, and neither does the brief introduction from the sports commentator Bill Littlefield.

The attempt to link modern athletes and ancient athletes inevitably runs up against major cultural differences. It is true that ancient athletics included boxing, wrestling, and foot racing, and a pentathlon that added the long jump, the discus throw, the javelin throw, wrestling, and the stadium race. But we must never lose sight of the popular savagery of the *pankration*. Even in more conventional events, antiquity showed a tolerance, or perhaps a taste, that is utterly alien to the modern world. A famous boxing match at Nemea ended as one fighter plunged his hand, with fingers extended, into the stomach of his opponent with such force that he tore out the man's intestines. The offender was reprimanded and expelled, not for the violence of his act but for breaking a last-minute procedural agreement whereby, after a long match, each had promised to deliver only more blow. By using all his fingers the delinquent was deemed to have delivered more than one blow—one with each finger.

Ancient and modern athletics both have depended upon the skillful deployment of the human body, and both have responded to a system of prizes (*athla*) for excellence. To the extent that a fit, strong, and well-trained body is a prerequisite for any athlete, the Greeks of antiquity and the global competitors of

G.W. Bowersock is a professor of ancient history at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

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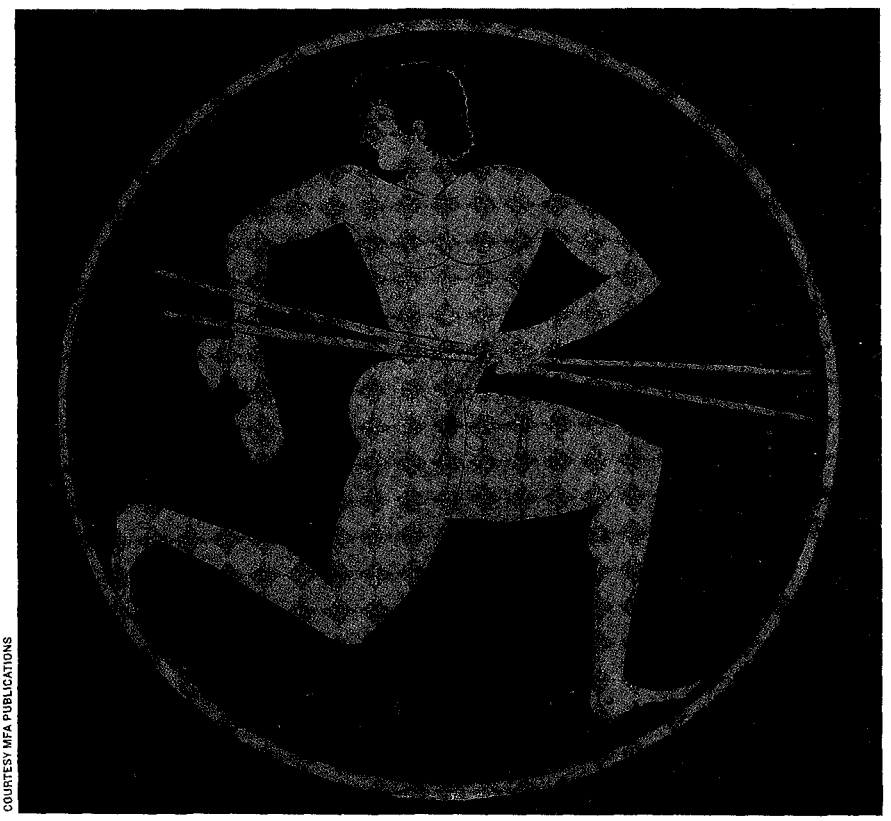
today's Olympics have much in common. Stadium events, such as running, jumping, and discus-throwing, have classical analogues, but there will be no chariot races in Athens this summer. Nor will today's wrestlers grapple with each other in a standing position, as the ancients did, except when they were in the *pankration*, where they could freely draw blood. Boxing and wrestling matches had no time limits in antiquity, and most competitions had no prize other than victory itself. There were no silver or bronze medals.



COURTESY MFA PUBLICATIONS

***A pentathlete, detail from a drinking cup*, ca. 500 B.C.E.**

IF ANYONE IN ATHENS TODAY were to travel back magically into ancient Greece for the Olympic games, the most conspicuous difference between now and then would undoubtedly be the appearance of the athletes. They were all male and they were all naked. Not even the Greeks seem to have known exactly how it happened that their athletes competed in the nude, but, as Thucydides and Herodotus were well aware, they were unlike peoples outside the Hellenic orbit who considered male nudity shameful. Legend had it that a certain Orsippus of Megara had dropped his loincloth at Olympia in the late eighth century B.C.E., but Thucydides and Plato both believed that athletics in the nude had begun not very long before their own time. Vase-painting as well as literary tradition leave us in no doubt that nudity was the norm, even if the odd loincloth shows up once in a while on vases made for export.

The Greek custom of athletic nudity is reflected in our word *gymnasium*, derived from the Greek word *gymnos*, or naked. From his experience in the classroom Miller observes that the nudity "invariably makes modern students (particularly males) uncomfortable." Readers, like Miller's students, will find small consolation in his wry comment that the danger of injury is less than might appear because "the cremaster muscle forces the genitals to contract during exercise." To prepare for exercise, the Greek athlete sometimes tied up the foreskin of his penis (the Greeks did not practice circumcision) by a process that Miller and others erroneously call infibulation. No pin, or *fibula*, was involved, as it was later in Roman attempts to enforce sexual abstinence. The Greek procedure, which is shown on vases as dexterously accomplished with only one hand, was perhaps designed to heighten mobility or to prevent involuntary erections. The athlete would also anoint himself with olive oil before exercise. To clean himself afterward he applied a scraper, called a strigil, to remove the combined oil, sweat, and dust. No lockers, no showers.

THE SHEER ALIENNESS OF NUDE athletics seems to have links with Sparta. Near the beginning of his *History*, Thucydides observed that loincloths were normal at the Olympics of former times but that the Spartans had been the first to exercise without them and to anoint themselves with oil. The famously austere regime of Sparta would be compatible with such a far-reaching innovation, and it has sometimes been connected with the whole race of Dorian Greeks, to which the Spartans belonged. (The Athenians were Ionians.) The Dorians were reputed to have taken possession of the Peloponnese sometime after the Bronze Age. The Greeks tended to associate them with pederasty, as have modern historians. It was not for nothing that Wilde called his character Dorian Gray.

The question naturally arises whether sexual tastes of this kind lay behind the Spartan innovation of nude athletics, since the education of young males at Sparta involved pederastic apprenticeship to older men as well as a bizarre marriage ritual in which the bride was obliged to dress up as a boy for her first night. Whatever the origins, nude athletics became normal throughout the competitions of Greece. It is impossible to say to what extent there was a prurient element in masculine exposure at the Greek crown games, but it is clear from literature and vase-painting that this element was present. Apart from a designated priestess, married women were forbidden to attend the Olympic games. Virgins were allowed, but no one reveals how their credentials were checked at the gate. The sacral character of all the great games of the so-called *periodos* should never be forgotten, since the sexuality and the cruelty of the events were dedicated to the glory of the gods.

No writer from classical antiquity elaborated the divine ambience so magnificently as Pindar, the lyric genius of the fifth century B.C.E. In intricate meters and in grandiose language, he composed odes in honor of victors at all four of the *periodos* games. No one before or

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since has captured so eloquently the radiance of athletic success. "Hymns, lords of the lyre," wrote Pindar, "what god, what hero, what man shall I acclaim?" This famous line establishes a direct connection between athlete, hero, and god. The greatest of the contests was at Olympia: "If you wish to sing of contests, dear heart, look no farther than the warmth of the sun, the radiant star of the day in an empty heaven—we shall tell of no better contest than Olympia." It is in Pindar that we feel the splendor of Greek athletics, and escape from the innuendo and outright salaciousness of many other writers.

Yet Pindar, too, perpetuates the sense of alienness, not only through his exultant polytheism but also through the myths that he invokes in celebration of his athletes. In the first Olympian ode he tells the founding legend of the games, a legend so fundamental that it was depicted on the east pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. Pelops, the man who gave his name to the Peloponnese, sought the hand of Hippodameia, daughter of Oenomaus, who, as the local king, had decreed that a successful suitor must win against him in a chariot race. Pelops bribed the stable boy to replace the linchpin of Oenomaus's chariot with wax. When the wax melted, the king not only lost the race, he lost his life as well. This tale of cheating dominated Olympic mythology and its principal shrine, and no one, least of all Pindar, seemed to have found it embarrassing.

THE SHADOWY FIGURE OF HIPPODAMEIA at the Olympic games, the physical presence of the single priestess, and the virgins in the audience all serve to underscore yet another alien feature of Greek athletics: the marginal role of women. The Olympics and all the great games of Greece excluded women, although vase paintings sometimes show women as athletes. We know, for example, that the cult of Zeus's Hera at Olympia included a separate racing competition for women apart from the regular Olympics, and the myth of Atalanta's swiftness as a runner evidently encapsulates this tradition of female athletics. But the generally repressive attitude of the Greeks towards women kept them from any major participation in sport—with one conspicuous and significant exception.

That exception, perhaps not surprisingly, is Sparta. If its brides were turned into transvestites at marriage, its girls were treated as the equals of boys in sport. Although they did not compete in the nude, they wore a tunic that exposed one breast while securing the other, making them into apparent Amazons. In Sparta, we find institutionalized pederasty combined with exceptionally rigorous physical training for women. Miller includes an excellent chapter on women in ancient Greek athletics and draws attention to Lycurgus, the legendary founder of the Spartan way of life (the so-called *agoge*), who, according to Plutarch, ordained exercise for women no less than for men. This evoked scorn from other Greeks. Aristophanes has some rude remarks in *Lysistrata* about Spartan women kicking their buttocks as they jumped up in exercise. But Plutarch tells the story of a Spartan woman who replied proudly to a taunt that only Spartan women rule men, "Only Spartan women bear men." Clearly, effective child-bearing was the excuse for the Lycurgan regime, but its audacity should not be minimized on that account.

The Dorian ancestry of the Spartans probably explains, to some degree, the remarkable conjunction of homosexuality, feminism, and athletics. It also explains why the Spartans dominated the Olympic victor lists in the early decades of the games. But gradually the Olympics became the greatest interstate competition of the entire Hellenic world, and athletes streamed to the city every four years from the mainland cities and overseas colonies. Famously a truce was declared to bring all warfare to a halt throughout the duration of the games. The Olympics united for a time the fiercely independent city-states that characterized Greece in the archaic age.

Athletic competition served as a symbol of the agonistic spirit of the time. This was, at any rate, the view of Jacob

To Nicholas Hawksmoor

Nicholas, what a past you are, a crypt doorway
at St Alfege, the sex in St Anne's bell
tower, shoes this girl buys in Stepney
to say she's tough,

the East End where St George is, who is three
Georges, one insane who was saying What?What?What?
real fast, shaking hands with a bush he thought had been one
of the ambassadors.

The devil is important, also. Tell me how we're him,
when it's a surgeon and architect, Sir Christopher Wren's idea, the fire
so he can get commissioned to build new sights, nothing like
those pigeons burning

over our heads, still going for a V like they do until both
wings burnt off and the bird, it has no choice, Nicholas.
Wren put you where you are, making up churches for Anne
like out of nowhere,

so why should you feel unorthodox? A pyramid with glass
unicorns and lions, King George, pineapples, gigantic keystones,
is in your head, fine, draw them as steeples.
Not like our fathers cared

because everything is on its Philosophers' Stone, Mercury of Seven
Eagles, or Green Lion, half on methane waiting as luna, balsam
of sulfur, cinnabar, markasites to go into a gold—all being
the same, you know this.

HANNAH BAKER

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Burckhardt in Basel at the end of the nineteenth century, when he delivered his lectures on Greek cultural history. Burckhardt divided the history of early Greece down to the fifth century into two large frames, characterized by the terms "Heroic Man" and "Agonal Man," which a recent English translation has rendered by the anodyne "Heroic Age" and "Agonal Age." The heroes were the legendary warriors of the Homeric poems, who had the physical prowess of athletes and strove always to be the best. But theirs was not normally a world of competitive sport. The funeral games after the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad* anticipate (or conceivably reflect, depending upon the date of the poem) the role of athletics in a sacral context, but, as Burckhardt recognized, they do not evoke the international contests that begin with the Olympics.

"Agonal man," from the Greek word *agon*, or contest, was competitive to the core of his being. As a member of a *polis*, or city, he participated in collective allegiance to that social unit, but as a Greek he represented his city in interstate athletics and thereby served to bring the independent *poleis* into a larger Hellenic nation. As Burckhardt observed, "About Olympia in particular there was a special sacredness for the whole nation, and the games there, which had been largely Peloponnesian at the start, slowly became the unique revelation of Greek unity in the true sense of the word, whether of those living in the motherland or in the colonies."

THE PROMOTION OF THE *AGON* as an integral part of Greek life led inevitably to the development of the gymnasium as a place for training athletes. It was here that adults trained the young, and it was here that pederasty prospered as a rite of passage. Miller is excellent on homosexuality in the gymnasium, and he comments perceptively on the social benefits of erotic mentorship in athletic contexts. Profligacy, prostitution, and relations between adult males were uncompromisingly condemned in this society, as can readily be seen from a law prescribing conduct in the gymnasium of Beroea in Macedonia, where male prostitutes together with slaves, drunks, and madmen were explicitly forbidden to strip down with young athletes. Still, as Miller rightly says, homosexuality among the students and trainers in the gymnasium was "accepted, common, and regulated by tacit rules of conduct."

The *agon* and the gymnasium were integral to the life of all free males in archaic and classical Greece. In this respect, modern athletics and the modern Olympics are a world apart. Yet the celebration of victors in the ancient crown competitions and the glory that they acquired led eventually to the emergence of a class of professional athletes, such as we see today. With professionalism came bribery and cheating, and Miller chronicles some of the more sordid episodes. But no Greek could have forgotten that the Olympics themselves were founded upon bribery and cheating in the legend of Pelops. The potential for abuse in Greek athletics had been there from the start, even if the watchful gaze of the gods in whose honor the games were held—Zeus at Olympia or Apollo at Delphi—provided religious constraints that kept "agonal man" under control.

Burckhardt ended the age of the *agon* with the coming of the fifth century. The Persian and Peloponnesian wars opened up a new era that was both troubled and magnificent. The Persian invasions united the Greeks, and the conflict between Athens and Sparta divided them. Yet out of all the turmoil of that century came literary and artistic achievements that have no equal. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Pheidias, the Parthenon eclipse the glory of Olympia in the historical record—but the games went on. Their truces continued by and large to be observed.

But it is not the survival of the Greek athletic ideal amid the creative upheavals of the fifth century that is remarkable. It is its survival for some eight hundred years more. Miller gives a solid account of the changes that occurred over that long span of time, right through the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Some innovations—such as the development of the complicated device known as a *hysplex* for assuring a fair start for racing competitors—reflect the increasing sophistication of the organizers. But other devices served only to enhance the already bloody and savage aspect that had been there from the start. Boxers, who had originally worn a soft protective gauntlet called a *himas* to cover the forearm while exposing the fingers, began to wear in later centuries a hard *himas* that eventually included metal and covered the knuckles. This could inflict ghastly damage on an opponent, and it continued to be worn until the games came to end. At the same time, the crown competitions added events that would not, to modern eyes, appear to be athletic at all—competitions in music and declamation. The classical Olympics, to be sure, had offered prizes for heralds and trumpet-players, but this was principally to assure a successful public address system for the main events. Most cultural events belong to the later time.

ROMANS FOUND THE NUDITY of Greek athletes as alien as we do, but they tolerated it, and certain philhellenes such as Nero and Hadrian actively espoused it. The bloodier events of the games, particularly the *pankration*, actually coincided with Roman tastes in sport. The introduction of the horrors of gladiatorial combat into the Greek world came directly from Italy. The altered context of the Olympics and other crown games meant that professional competitors came to dominate these festivals. The cities of Greece no longer contributed their young or competed in a panhellenic spirit, as in former times, even though Hadrian did his best to promote a new cultural organization called the Panhellenion. The inscriptions of the eastern Roman empire give ample proof of the numbers and the popularity of traveling athletes who went from festival to festival with the acclaim and notoriety of modern pop stars.

Yet the ideal of Greek athletic contests did not die, and it continued to surprise non-Greeks. The satirist Lucian, who wrote in the second century of our era, imagined a dialogue between Solon and a Scythian called Anacharsis about the athletic training of boys. Solon describes the gymnasium, the various athletic events, the crowns awarded as prizes, and the nudity of athletes. Anacharsis is

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stupefied: "You put the boys naked in public, have them kicked and beaten, and then give apples and olive-leaves to the victors?" The same satirist, in a delicious piece of nonsense called the *True History*, includes an account of an island of the dead where the inhabitants are more than naked: they have no bodies at all, only shapes. There they celebrate contests called the *Thanatousia*, or games of the dead. The traditional events are all there—wrestling, boxing, racing, even poetry. But, says Lucian solemnly, "they have no *pankration*." Without bodies that event would have been a very tricky business.

The Olympics ground to a halt under the impact of a Christian government in the late fourth century. By then the event had anyway become a shadow of its former self. It was dominated by professional stars and no longer served to unite the Greeks by their common traditions. It had become just another of many public entertainments, in which gladiators, tightrope walkers, mimes, and professional charioteers were much more to popular taste than nude athletes.

Yet it is well to remember that the metaphors of athletics lived on in the hagiographical literature of the Christians themselves. Many of those who struggled against their earthly desires or met their deaths in martyrdom saw themselves, and were seen by their biographers, as spiritual athletes competing in heavenly competitions that often sound uncomfortably like the *Thanatousia*. The long evolution from Dorian pederasty to Christian martyrdom gives the history of Greek athletics a kaleidoscopic quality that can sometimes be more dazzling than clear. The Olympic spirit was not simple, and it was certainly not politically correct. ■

Nathan Glazer

The Memory Mall

THEIR LAST BATTLE:
THE FIGHT FOR THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL
By Nicolaus Mills
(Basic Books, 268 pp., $26)

THE OPENING OF THE National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Memorial Day seems to have been a huge success. For the moment at least, architectural critics and art critics, who had almost uniformly opposed the memorial's design and its placement prominently on the National Mall, between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, were silent, so as to allow the celebrants to have their day. According to reports, veterans—two-thirds of them are now gone, the newspapers say—were moved, delighted, pleased. Their sacrifice and their heroism were finally being recognized, long after the veterans of Vietnam and Korea had their memorials.

Two things are reliably the case, it seems, about the major memorials on the Mall, our national celebratory and ceremonial public space. It takes us a very long time to design and to build them, and they are always accompanied by controversy about their location, their design, their meaning, and their appropriateness. The World War II Memorial turns out to be no exception.

The Washington Monument was finally dedicated eighty-five years after Washington's death; the Lincoln Memorial was completed nearly sixty years after Lincoln's assassination; and the Jefferson Memorial took more than a century after his death to reach realization. The FDR Memorial improved the pace, opening in 1997, a mere fifty-two years after Roosevelt's death in office. (In his new book about the World War II Memorial, Nicolaus Mills notes the coincidence that it was exactly forty-nine years after the presidents' deaths that groundbreaking occurred on the Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt memorials.) By historical standards, then, the World War II Memorial has not done too badly.

Nor has it been particularly more controversial than others. What is unique about the World War II Memorial is that it represents either a remarkable aberration in the history of public and official taste or an equally remarkable tectonic shift in that taste. The last classical monument on or near the Mall was the Jefferson Memorial, fought over in the 1930s. Everything that has gone up on or near the Mall since has reflected, timidly or boldly, the modernist revolution and the abandonment of historical models in art and architecture: the Museum of American History, the East Wing of the National Gallery, the Air and Space Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum, and, signifying the complete triumph of modernism, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was also hugely popular. (The enormous Ronald Reagan Building apes the classical, but its backward-looking style may be excused and explained by its presence in the Federal Triangle.)

Even if the furthest reaches of modernism were eschewed, there was no effort, in anything that went up in this revered space after the Jefferson Memorial, to refer back to historical styles in any way that an ordinary observer could recognize, and in particular to the longest-lasting style of all, and the one that had been most influential in the building of the capital until World War II: I mean the classical style. Was it likely that a classicizing monument could ever again find its way to the Mall? Well, now it has; and one must contemplate what that means for the history of design and for public taste.

THE PUBLIC DOES NOT DESIGN memorials; architects and designers do. But the public certainly plays a major role, by way of resolutions in Congress setting up memorial commissions and defining their scope, and through the judgment of the host of commissions and committees that must approve memorials, particularly if they are to intrude on the Mall. These democratic modifications of the artistic process have proliferated in the past century, but their number has not made the task of deciding on the siting and the design of monuments any easier. In the case of the World War II Memorial, as we learn from Nicolaus Mills's full and fine account of the building of the memorial, there was the American Battle Monuments Commission, which was given by a House and Senate joint resolution in 1995 the "legal authority to establish a national World War II memorial within the monumental core area of Washington."

But that was not all. The first meeting to consider the site already included representatives of the National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of

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Fine Arts, the National Capital Memorial Commission, and the National Park Service, all of whom had some statutory rights and authority over site selection, and most of whom could participate in the selection of a design, to the point of veto. (Why it took fifty years for Congress to even vote on a memorial is an interesting question, and Mills has some thoughts on the matter. At the war's end, he suggests, sentiment favored living memorials—schools, parks, playgrounds, and the like. Mills quotes Philip Johnson, Percival Goodman, and Robert Moses agreeing that these would be better than stone and bronze. So the modernists and the public were of one mind that we needed no great national monument.)

If there was to be a site on the Mall, how could it be lesser than the modest sites of the Vietnam and Korea memorials, nestled in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial? And if it was to be a larger site than these, how could it not be the ornamental pool to the west of the Washington Monument? But if the memorial was to be located there, would it not interfere with the unbroken vista from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial? All these considerations and questions preceded an open public competition—almost all the great memorials have required such competitions—for the design of the memorial, for how could one design it if it was not clear where it was to be?

The controversy over this location has never been stilled. The height of the winning proposed memorial, now realized, does not interfere unduly with the view; but that was only one of the problems with the site. The National Mall in the 1990s was basically the completed fulfillment of the design proposed in 1902 by the architectural establishment of that time. The state of the capital in that era, one hundred years after its founding, was not a happy one. A Senate resolution created a Senate Park Commission, which was asked to propose what should happen to the Mall. At the time, the Mall was a mess, with a railroad station and a rail line being only one of its indignities. Daniel Burnham of Chicago, Charles McKim of New York's McKim Mead and White, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., the son of the great landscape designer, and Augustus St. Gaudens made up the commission, and in remarkably short order they delivered a grand plan for the Mall. Rarely in the history of planning has a large-scale plan been realized with so little departure from its essentials, though it did take a century to do so.

According to their plan, the Mall was to be extended beyond the Washington Monument onto reclaimed land from the Potomac River and to climax in a classical temple to Lincoln, which was realized. The north-south axis running through the Mall along the line of the Washington Monument was to climax in the south with a great monument, which was also realized when the Jefferson Memorial opened. The Mall between the Capitol and the Washington Monument was to be lined by museums and great public buildings, and that was also fulfilled (though in mid-century their style shifted from the classicism displayed in the Senate Park Commission's illustrations to modernism of one kind or another). So the Mall was completed, filled, finished. Could another great monument be shoehorned in between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial without damage to the place?

MANY THOUGHT NOT. BUT the ornamental pool below the Washington Monument was really the only possible site for a memorial that had to be more prominent than the Vietnam and Korean war memorials, and this was the site chosen. A competition—open to all, identities not revealed—was set. The competitors were sharply constrained by the existing features of the site. It almost dictated a symmetrical design, the kind that does not comport easily with modernism.

No Maya Lin emerged from this anonymous competition. Six out of 407 proposals submitted were chosen for a second round of competition, all but one by established and well-known architects, one by a world-famous architect. Only one proposal of the six came from a group of unknown designers still in architecture school. Mills gives a sketch and a description of each of the six. It is not clear that any would have been a great improvement over the winning proposal by Friedrich St. Florian. Only one of the six—the one by the students—suggests the tougher side of modernism. They proposed two bunkers of disparate form. All the designers were constrained by the need to provide a great deal of exhibition space, which could only be underground if it was not to interfere with the vista—a requirement that was later abandoned.

Friedrich St. Florian, the winner, was born in Graz in 1932, as Friedrich Flor-

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ian Gartler. He studied at its Technische Universität, and started almost immediately to win prizes in major competitions. Often teamed with his friend and fellow student Raimund Abraham (whose recent Austrian Cultural Forum on 52nd Street in New York is much admired), he worked in the mainstream and at the extremes of modernism. When he changed his name to Friedrich St. Florian, the "St." referred to the Italian futurist Antonio Sant' Elia. His admiration for the American architecture of the time led him as a Fulbright scholar to the United States in 1961, and to an appointment at the Rhode Island School of Design. He was impressed by the visionary Buckminster Fuller, and one of his projects, Mills tells us, was an "imaginary architecture" based on Fuller's notion that air travel would make highways unnecessary, and consisting of "imaginary spaces in the sky based on the holding patterns of aircraft over New York City airports."

A high point in St. Florian's varied career of teaching, projects, exhibitions, and competitions was winning second prize (together with Abraham and a third architect) in the competition for the Pompidou Center in Paris. But not much by him was built. Little in this past foreshadowed his winning memorial design of columnar forms ornamented with bronze wreaths placed symmetrically around the oval pool, with arches of triumph at the two ends. Marble, bronze, wreaths, laurels, eagles: these were not the materials and the forms of modernist architecture and design.

WHILE THE SPECIFIC FORMS in St. Florian's design were far from correct classical architecture—and thus open to attack by the few remaining exponents of classicism—they were very familiar to architectural historians and critics, and reminded them of the stripped-down classicism that was popular in the architecture of the 1930s in the United States—and in Nazi Germany, as well as other places. (Osbert Lancaster, in a satiric picture-book history of architecture, once showed on two adjacent pages sketches of almost identical buildings in this style—but one, it was revealed by the labels, is in "Third Reich" style and the other in "Marxist Non-Aryan" style.)

The editor of a leading architecture magazine called the St. Florian design "painfully reminiscent of designs by Nazi architect Albert Speer." One cartoon, reproduced by Mills, shows Bill Mauldin–style disheveled GIs observing the monument skeptically. One is saying, "Looks like an officers club ... a German officers club." One can imagine how painful all this was to the architect, an Austrian immigrant who had paid his dues to modernism and Americanism, and was an admirer of Louis Kahn and Kahn's teacher Paul Cret (a master of the stripped-down classical style, whose works can be seen on and near the Mall). One wonders whether St. Florian would have been chosen had the competition not been anonymous.

The connection of architectural style to ideologies and political regimes is not a simple matter. Recall that Roman imperial forms came to represent American democracy; and some argue that their adoption represented in itself a new American imperialism. Artistic taste and political meaning clash in contradictory and confusing ways. I understand the German chancellor of the newly reunified Germany preferred a more restrained version of the Chancellery that was to be built in the new capital of Berlin, but when he was shown a picture of a Nazi-era building that looked remarkably like the sober design that he favored, he reluctantly went for the modernist design that has since been built.

The host of critics of St. Florian's design did not prevail, obviously. Some distinguished architecture critics did defend it: Ada Louise Huxtable, Witold Rybczynski, Robert Campbell. But it is interesting to note that whereas the controversy over Maya Lin's minimalist Vietnam Veterans Memorial did not shake universal support for it among critics and influenced only less sophisticated supporters, some contributors, and some of the veterans themselves, the controversy around the World War II Memorial was confined for the most part to critics and newspaper columnists. The first debate was among the public at large; the second was a debate among elites. There does not seem to be any record of opposition to the World War II Memorial from veterans' groups, not a hint of demurral or reservation from the thousands of surviving veterans of World War II who came to its opening.

In the reporting of *The Washington Post*—many of whose writers had been critical of the memorial—on the dedication ceremonies, one reads in a headline, "National World War II Memorial Design's Critics Should Use Hearts, not Eyes, Some Say." One visitor is quoted: "It's not here for looks and design and remarks about appearance. It's for remembrance, to remember what the guys went through." Another said: "As long as it's a memorial, it could be a hole in the ground with a plaque on it and it wouldn't matter." The last speaker did not realize how apt her remark was. One of the most admired memorials of recent years (I mean among sophisticates) is the one that marks the Nazi burning of condemned books. On the plaza off Unter den Linden in Berlin where the books were piled and burned, one now finds a plaque, and a Plexiglas window through which one can view underground a hole, lined with empty shelves.

THE CONTRADICTIONS MULTIPLY. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was universally approved by the critics, but it was attacked by some populists. Ross Perot, who had funded the competition, protested; Representative Henry Hyde organized congressional opposition; Secretary of the Interior James Watt held up the construction permit. President Ronald Reagan did not attend the dedication, and did not visit the memorial for a year. But the memorial became immensely popular—indeed, it is now the most visited of any of the shrines on the Mall. Did the architecture critics know something that the memorial's opponents, who thought they spoke for the people, did not?

The World War II Memorial saw the reverse configuration of response: resistance from the architecture critics and historians, but a quiescent public and public officials quite ready to accept St. Florian's design, and enthusiastic at its dedication. Will public appreciation wither, and expert criticism be shown to be right, as popular distaste rises for the World War II Memorial? There are monuments of great scale on the Mall that hardly anyone notices these days. Consider the enormous memorial to Ulysses S. Grant, with the second largest equestrian statue in the world (the first is at the Victor Emmanuel monument in Rome), and many vividly sculpted soldiers and horses, spreading over a great expanse of the Mall.

Memorials and monuments are peculiar things, and they have never been more peculiar than in the age of modernism. Monuments must draw upon the

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dominant artistic tendencies and artists of the day—and yet at the same time appeal to the masses whose taste and values the modern artist usually spurns. We have seen a rising tide of rebellion against bourgeois society among artists for the last two centuries, and quite early in the twentieth century the modernists had fully eclipsed the traditionalists. Sometimes a contemporary modern artist and popular taste come together, and the dominant example is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. But all too often there is no way of bringing together the artists of the day with the sentiments of the public. Consider the artists who have work in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: Richard Serra, Sol Lewitt, Ellsworth Kelly. What their pieces, all of them entirely typical of their respective styles, have to do with the Holocaust God only knows. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is so successful because at the time there was no such thing as a "Maya Lin" (that is, an artwork interpreted as representing her) to eclipse the meaning that her monument intended.

Is the World War II Memorial an aberrational jab in the direction of classicism, or does it in fact represent a new skepticism about modernism in which the most advanced style becomes just another possible style? We will know more as new monuments crowd in on the Mall. The Museum of the American Indian is about to open on the last site on the Mall available for a major building, and it will be interesting to see what the architecture critics think. The African American Museum is due, and will have a site by congressional decree as close to the Mall as can be managed. There will be a monument to the Adamses—and can a monument to the only presidents among the first half-dozen who did not have slaves be denied a major location? And after the African American Museum, will a Hispanic museum be denied?

The crowding on the Mall, which we seem unable to resist, may be a more serious problem for civic design than the style of the new monuments and buildings. Mills thinks the criticism of site and style is misguided. He does not accept the view that the Mall should be considered "a completed urban work of art," never to be touched. He does not believe, as Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, a critic, put it, that the Mall is "the urban equivalent of the Grand Canyon." Nor need a memorial reflect "the architecture of the time." He argues, against Herbert Muschamp, for the "virtues of taking a more pluralistic approach" to contemporary design. Perhaps most important for him, the memorial does speak to the veterans of today. Who can be certain (as Roger Lewis of *The Washington Post* and Michael Kimmelman of *The New York Times* asserted) that it will not speak to the future?

But finally Mills is too ready to surrender the distinctive and rare qualities of the space that existed before the monument was built. A friend present at the celebration of the opening of the new World War II Memorial, a lover of the Mall, writes that "the treasured space of the Mall and its scenic beauty had completely disappeared." If that is so, it is sad indeed, and rather more important than the style of the new memorial. The new memorial is busy, heaping forms and inscriptions and decorations in a space that was serene and silent. If the tranquility of this hallowed precinct is indeed gone, this is more important, and more discouraging, than a shift in style. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

Continued from page 4

wait. Many countries offered support if we would do so. We didn't. The Bush administration used WMD as its casus belli, stating that weapons posed an imminent threat. There was no imminent threat, and there was plenty of information before the war to let us know that. Nobody liked Saddam. His horrendous dictatorship deserved the world's attention; but the operative word here is "world." The biggest error made by supporters of the war was not to speak out against the United States' preemptive strikes, which have gotten the world into a terrible mess that will take years, if not decades, to untangle.

CHRISTINE WILSON
Colville, Washington

COMMON MAN

While I mostly agreed with Leon Wieseltier's comments, I was drawn to this line: "The rule of Saddam Hussein was uncommonly brutal" ("What Remains," June 28). Would that it were so! First, think of worse—and more recent—horrors in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Chechnya, Guatemala, and North Korea, which stands alone in its perversity. Then compare Kuwait after Saddam with Grozny after Vladimir Putin. Commonly pilloried names like Augusto Pinochet, Fidel Castro, and Muammar Qaddafi pale in relation to these horrors of much greater magnitude and much less justification. Saddam probably falls in a realm of lesser evil that includes Bashar Al Assad of Syria, General Suharto of Indonesia, Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, and numerous other neighborhood bullies. Demonizing Saddam may have been useful in justifying war, but now is a time for somber reflection. While Saddam may have been clever at times, he was all-too-commonly brutal. Which is not to say we shouldn't have removed him. Despite the damage the war did, his ouster is still a good thing—there is undeniably more damage he could have done, even without WMDs.

BILL ELDRIDGE
Prague, Czech Republic

FOOL'S ERRAND

Senator John McCain is scrambling, like so many others, to justify his failure to fulfill his obligations to the American people as an elected official ("Hard Truth," June 28). I find his assertion that "we greatly overestimated Iraq's weapons of mass destruction" to be a poor reflection on members of Congress, McCain included. The Bush administration did not overestimate; it plainly lied because no such weapons existed. McCain should either admit that the president lied or that members of Congress failed to ask tough questions. On this issue, McCain, among others, fails the test of leadership. He was too willing accept that the emperor had new clothes.

GARY HOROWITZ
Frostburg, Maryland

DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN

If the Iraq war was worth fighting for the reasons Paul Berman states ("Silence and Cruelty," June 28), doesn't our president deserve credit for having initiated the conflict, despite the many failures in the aftermath of the initial fighting? Is there another American politician who would have stood firm in the face of our most important allies and done what was right?

STEVEN L. WEISS
Princeton, New Jersey

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NEW YORK DIARIST

Sidney

DEATH IS NEVER COURTEOUS, but the death of a philosopher seems particularly insulting. Philosophy, at least in its loftiest concept, endeavors to equip the mind against the idea of extinction; but eventually it is revealed to everyone that extinction is not an idea, and whatever philosophy knows about death, death knows nothing about philosophy. "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death," Spinoza declared, and the same may be said about an unfree man. The most thoughtful man dies as finally as the least thoughtful man. Yet philosophy never purported to be a solution to the problem of mortality, like religion; and the death of a thoughtful man, whether or not he is a philosopher, leaves in its wake the bequest of his example. From the fact that death is stupid it does not follow that one must have a stupid death. And what is an intelligent death, if not the conclusion of an intelligent life? One dies as one lives. These were my thoughts as I ate a condignly sour pickle on Essex Street on a scalding afternoon this week, after the funeral of the most purely philosophical person I have ever known.

THE ANGEL OF DEATH HAS BEEN BUSILY spiting the stoicism of the philosophers: Rawls, Nozick, Williams, Davidson, Wollheim, Hampshire. And now Sidney Morgenbesser, whom I loved. And not, I hasten to declare, chiefly for his jokes. They are properly famous, but their fame was burdensome to Sidney. He wanted to be remembered for more, this hilarious man consecrated to things much higher than hilarity. His jokes (he was still making them a few weeks before he died, frail in a wheelchair) were puns produced at an almost decadent plane of mental cultivation, as if there is an audience anywhere in the world for the exclamation "*yoreh paideia*!"; or they were another way of doing what he did best and most joyously, which was the multiplication of distinctions. Sidney's life was a celebration of the analytical distinction as the primary instrument of intellectual advancement. His training in logic and his training in Talmud left his preternaturally lucid mind chopping, chopping, chopping. "It was Lovejoy, I think, who once wittily suggested that Dewey hated the number 2," Sidney once wrote, "implying that Dewey was opposed not merely to dualisms but even to important distinctions." But not Sidney (or Sidney's Dewey): 2 was just the beginning of the ride, and the ride was long. As much in temperament as in principle, cosmologically as well as politically, he was the most natural of pluralists.

A CASUAL CONVERSATION WITH SIDNEY could be shattering. "Whaddaya mean?" he would inquire about whatever you just said, and as soon as he asked about your meaning you saw it pass before your eyes. I met him at Columbia, where I was the happiest student in the world. I had been warned that he was withering, but it was he who saved me from the clutches of his own method. One day Sidney called me into his office in Philosophy Hall—I had never seen a room with so many read books!—to tell me that I was in trouble. I had completed all the work necessary for a major in philosophy, but I had taken no course in logic or the philosophy of language. This was a grave dereliction in the golden age of analyticity. I explained that I had not meant to defy the department's requirements. The problem was simply that I was incompetent at, and indifferent to, those subjects. (I confided in him that I had similarly not taken the swimming test because I could not swim.) He was not quite persuaded, and so he launched into a disquisition on the logical performance of adverbs in certain kinds of sentences, or some such punishment. After a few minutes of this stringency he abruptly stopped, and said to me: "Your eyes didn't light up at a thing I just said. You're right. This isn't for you." I offer this trivial recollection as evidence that there was nothing corrosive about the spirit of Sidney's cleverness, even if sometimes it left little standing. If his were Socratic questions, they were without Socratic sanctimony. They were animated, rather, by Sidney's great cause: the justification of belief. What he observed about the medieval Jewish philosophers in *Commentary* in 1946 could also be said of him: he "would never have mistaken fiat for philosophy." He had a passion for reasons.

SIDNEY ESCAPED THE ARIDITY OF THE philosophy of which he was the master. This was owed, of course, to his vivacity (he once set this as an exam question: "It is often said that Marx and Freud went too far. How far would you go?"). And also to something else: he was stupendously Jewish. The depth of Sidney's affiliation with his people and his religion cannot be exaggerated. From first to last he was, to borrow Morris Raphael Cohen's phrase, a wondering Jew. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary when the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary was the most formidable array of Jewish scholars ever assembled in a single institution. He knew Jewish languages and he knew Jewish texts. By his teaching and his talking he glorified two of the most significant values of his patrimony: the charisma of the intellect and the power of the oral tradition. (He published rarely because there was too much in his head, not because there was too little. He was not one of the "hermenudniks.") He was a hot Zionist—we became friends in the autumn of 1973, when we walked down Broadway to Mill's Luncheonette late every night to get the next day's *Times* as soon it was delivered, because Israel was attacked and we were anguished—and an early supporter of reconciliation, and in the bitter ancient days, of recognition, between Israelis and Palestinians. Judaism and justice: in his complicated and compassionate heart they were never sundered. Listening to Sidney, I overcame the stifling antinomy between fidelity and honesty that I had brought with me from Brooklyn. He criticized what he cherished and he cherished what he criticized.

ESSEX, HESTER, ORCHARD, LUDLOW, Grand: who could doubt our knowledge of the physical world here? But these were the streets that made Mrs. Morgenbesser's son need to discover if Bishop Berkeley is right, and if Cartesian dualism is true, and what the nature of scientific explanation, and democracy, and holiness, is. As I wandered lugubriously through his streets, again under the spell of my eccentric hero of reason, I was reminded of his retort to the question of why there is something and not nothing. "And if there were nothing, you would also complain!" It felt like there was nothing. I complained.

LEON WIESELTIER

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Egypt

Is it a factor for peace in the Middle East?

In 1979, under the stewardship of President Jimmy Carter, Israel and Egypt signed the Camp David peace treaty, by which Israel committed itself to yield the Sinai to Egypt, together with all its material and strategic assets. The whole world hoped that this historic handshake would indeed finally bring peace and tranquility to the troubled Middle East.

What are the facts?

An implacable enemy. Egypt is Israel's most implacable enemy. It was the key player and military leader in the 1948 assault on the nascent Jewish state. Almost miraculously, Israel was able to defeat the combined Arab might. Egypt remained in occupation of the Gaza strip.

But thirsting for revenge, Egypt – together with Jordan and Syria – attacked Israel again in 1967. In a brilliant campaign that will be studied in war colleges for centuries, Israel, in six days, utterly destroyed the Arab war machine. At the end of that war, Israel stayed in possession of the the vast Sinai.

> "If Egypt does indeed launch war against Israel, it could ultimately include weapons of mass destruction. It is up to the world, to prevent this disaster, if it is still possible."

Instead of licking its wounds, Egypt, after its rout in the Six Day War, almost immediately engaged in a war of attrition against Israel. That war lasted for years. Egypt never ceased in its attempt to destroy Israel. The hostility culminated once again on Yom Kipper of 1973, when the Egyptian armed forces, in coordination with Syria, once again launched a major war against Israel. Israel once again prevailed. Only urgent intervention by the United States and others brought about a truce and prevented the total annihilation of the Egyptian force.

In the 1979 Camp David peace treaty Israel yielded the Sinai to Egypt together with all the assets it had developed there. Still, Israelis of all political persuasions were almost giddy with hope and anticipation that their most implacable enemy had opted for peace. Finally, the talented people of Israel could now bring the promise and the potential of the Jewish homeland to full fruition.

A terrible disappointment. The disappointment was almost immediate. Anwar Sadat was assassinated by one of his own terrorist countrymen. He had to die, for no other reason than for having denied the Arab mantra: No peace, no negotiation, and no recognition of Israel.

Israel had envisioned its peace with Egypt as that between the United States and Canada. But that was not to be. Right from the very beginning, travel was harshly discouraged and strictly controlled by Egypt. Trade was non-existent. Israel's ambassador to Cairo was under virtual house arrest. He was never included in any official function. The Egyptian press, tightly controlled by the government, initiated an orgy of anti-Semitic publicity, highlighted by hateful cartoons rivaling those of the "Stürmar," the notorious Nazi hate sheet. There hasn't been an Egyptian ambassador in Israel for over three years.

Egypt is no friend of the United States. It consistently votes against our country's interest in the forums of the United Nations. In order to get Egypt to agree to the Camp David peace in 1979, the United States committed itself to aid Egypt to the tune of $2.2 billion per year. Only about $.9 billion of that is earmarked as "economic aid." The balance, over $1.3 billion, is for military aid.

Egypt has the largest armed forces in the entire Middle East, in manpower and in equipment. It has recently supplemented its navy with eleven new battle cruisers. It has placed four recent orders for F-16's, totaling 190 new planes. It has acquired 180 Hawk and 1,000 Hellfire missiles. It has already received delivery of 24 Apache helicopters and it expects to receive twelve more. The armored corps is comprised of the most modern U.S. tanks. Egypt is bordered by Libya, Sudan and Israel. It doesn't take much imagination to figure out against which of these countries all of this armament, all of this military power is directed. It's toward Israel, of course.

What does the U.S. hope to accomplish by arming this mortal enemy of Israel, which is still bent on the destruction of the Jewish state? Since Israel is the one immutable ally of the United States in the entire region, a country we can always count on, it is hard to understand why our government would be participatory in Israel's possible destruction. It makes no sense at all.

There can be no question that Egypt is once again girding for war against Israel – either alone or with the enthusiastic collaboration of other Muslim nations. Legislation has been introduced in Congress to reduce and eventually eliminate altogether the $1.3 billion annual military aid that Egypt receives from us. But even if that were to succeed, it may already be too late. If Egypt does indeed launch war against Israel, it could ultimately include weapons of mass destruction. It is up to the world to prevent this disaster, if it is still possible.

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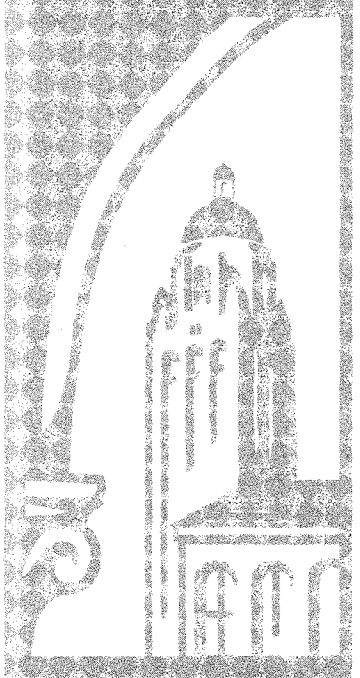

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People who think foreign aid ought to be used to help end poverty complain that it has too many strings attached. That strings are attached is true; the problem is not too many strings but rather that the wrong strings are attached to end poverty.

Most aid reflects a deal between leaders in rich, democratic countries and leaders in poor, despotic countries. Autocrats need money to keep core supporters—the military, key bureaucrats, close family members—in line, and democrats need policy concessions that help with reelection. Since few voters care much about foreign policy, these are marginal effects and so small amounts are spent on aid.

A natural opportunity exists for deals between democrats and autocrats. The latter don't need successful policies to stay in office, so they can agree to policies their citizens don't like in exchange for money to sustain them in power. Just consider Hosni Mubarak's agreement for Egypt to live in peace with Israel. In fact, autocrats like Mubarak must maintain their citizenry's dislike for policy concessions they grant. If the policy could be enforced without aid, there would be no reason to continue to pay. Democratic leaders cannot easily buy incumbency; they must deliver policies their constituents like. Thus, the main string attached to foreign aid deals is money for policy. That is a winning situation for leaders in donor and recipient countries and is pretty good for donor citizens too. But it is bad for ordinary citizens in the recipient country. Their welfare is sold for aid.

No wonder aid does little to raise incomes, improve health or education, or do the myriad other things well-intentioned people would like aid to do. How might these problems be corrected? There are four steps to changing aid into a means to help the poor:

1. Encourage individuals and groups to give aid through NGOs or directly to needy recipients, rather than by and to government. Shifting aid outside government reduces the danger of government deals that do not alleviate poverty. (Currently the United States contributes about $56 per American citizen in global aid. Total assistance could easily be maintained if wealthier families contributed twice that, deducting it from their taxes as charitable giving.)

2. Require aid recipients to open their books to independent, external audit.

3. Broadcast audit results in easily digested form.

4. When aid must be given to governments, give to those that have at least two organized, freely operating political parties or other political groups that articulate views different from those of their government, and be sure that these groups have an unencumbered right to compete against the incumbent leader for office.

Until poverty-alleviating aid is moved out of the government's domain and into the hands of caring citizens, and **until government aid is constrained to go as directly as possible to those who need the money the most, aid will continue to serve as a means to achieve policy goals (a good thing), to prolong despotism (a bad thing), and to lead recipients to engage in policies that are against the interests of their own citizens (a very bad thing).**

—Bruce Bueno de Mesquita

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the Silver Professor of Politics at New York University.

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